



Uninformative News or Hollow Campaigns?

Political Campaigns on the Social Networking Sites
and the Traditional Media Coverage

Tiago André Casal da Silva

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences
of the European University Institute

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European University Institute
Department of Political and Social Sciences

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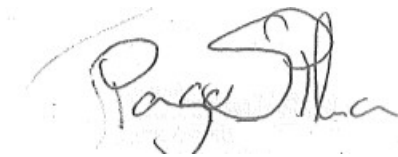
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Summary of the thesis

This thesis addresses the unclear and puzzling responsibility of both traditional media and political actors for the lack of substantial political issues in the news coverage of political elections. The literature has observed a growing tendency of journalists, when reporting elections, to emphasize aspects such as strategy/horse-race and conflict, instead of presenting relevant policy information. This study analyzes to what extent a media logic is hindering the electoral competitors from producing more informative and less conflict-driven campaigns, by examining the media frames employed by journalists, in their newspaper articles, and by the main parties/candidates, in their social media campaigns.

Different to other communication channels, social media offer politicians and parties a unique opportunity to bypass journalists and directly present their messages to a larger and more diverse audience. The main objective of this study is to understand if political elections are framed differently by journalists and political actors and test two sets of competing hypotheses: Uninformative News (if journalists distort political events to become more attractive rather than informative) and Hollow Campaigns (if the politicians themselves avoid discussing issues in their campaigns). In order to so, an extensive content analysis of the press and social media was carried out for four first-order elections (US 2012, Italy 2013, Brazil 2014 and Portugal 2015). For each election, two newspapers and the campaigns of the main parties/candidates on three social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) were manually coded during the four weeks before election day. The results show that the press was consistently more likely than social media to deal with aspects such as strategy/horse-race and conflict. In addition to this, the salience of substantive political issues was also higher in social media campaigns than in newspaper articles. Overall, despite some differences between candidates/parties, countries and social media platforms, the results consistently give support to the Uninformative News hypothesis.

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Chapter One – Introduction

This dissertation addresses the unclear and puzzling responsibility of both traditional media and political actors for the absence of substantive political issues in the media coverage of political elections. The news coverage of political campaigns is a crucial aspect in political communication's research (Kaid, 1996). Since modern campaigns have been essentially disputed on traditional media, the news coverage of elections is one of the most important links between politicians and the electorate (Norris et al., 1999). However, the literature has been observing, especially since the early 1990s, an increasing tendency of the press and television, when reporting elections, to emphasize conflict, strategy, horse-race and other entertaining and controversial aspects, instead of conveying more substantive political information to the citizenry. This trend of framing political events, by the traditional media, is worth studying since it can pose a challenge to the proper functioning of modern democracies in two different ways. Firstly, since less substantive political information is included in the articles, citizens might also become less informed about the candidates' opinions on important political issues. Secondly, this type of news coverage of political events apparently has a negative effect on citizens' attitudes towards politics, increasing not only citizens' political cynicism but also reducing their sense of political efficacy. It also raises the following question: Why does the traditional media's news coverage of elections emphasize the strategy/horse-race and conflict in the campaigns and lacks other important aspects, such as the candidates and parties' positions on relevant political issues? We can find in the literature two possible explanations.

The first explanation puts the responsibility on the media, with a large body of literature blaming the messenger, stating that the uninformative news coverage is a result of the messenger's distortion of the real campaign. Two debated reasons for this phenomenon are the news professionals' apparent distrust of political actors or the audiences' lack of interest in politics, which forces the media, following a so-called "media logic", to rely on more appealing, entertaining and bloodthirsty approaches when reporting political elections. The media logic theory suggests that the candidates' attempts, during campaigns, to convey and discuss substantive political issues are somehow obstructed and reframed by the media's commercial pretensions. From this perspective, the highly controversial and *uninformative news* of electoral campaigns are the result of journalistic and editorial norms and commercial principles that govern the traditional media nowadays.

The second explanation asserts that the accusations of lack of interest in reporting policy issues by the traditional media might be somehow unfair or exacerbated. The news coverage by the traditional media may in fact reflect new political campaigns where candidates are more concerned with strategic and mass marketing principles and less worried about presenting substantive policy information to the electorate. The literature discussing modern political mass-marketing strategies makes us question how fair the accusations of the media's lack of interest in substantive political issues actually are. In fact, political actors might be responsible for the lack of content in the media's news coverage of political campaigns. In this scenario, candidates may prefer to relegate and avoid non-consensual and delicate issues and positions that might alienate their electorate and emphasize less important aspects during their campaigns, such as how are they campaigning or simply attacking their opponents. It can also be the case that political actors adapt their campaign discourse to fit the norms of traditional mainstream media that favor visuals or catchy and controversial bits of information as an alternative to substantive political content, like the candidates' position about relevant policy issues. As Trippi (2008, 154) observes, "if you don't feed the reporters every five hours, your campaign is over". Even though Kahn & Kenney (1999, p.238) found that the issues more salient on the traditional media are not necessarily the issues that are more discussed by senatorial candidates, there is the perception that candidates, in order to get more visibility, adapt their offline campaign strategies and content to receive more attention from journalists (see Blumler, 1990; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). Simply put, the traditional media news coverage might be controversial, entertaining and lack substantive political issues simply because the main campaign actors prefer to avoid those issues and produce *hollow campaigns*. Given these two competing possibilities, it is reasonable to ask ourselves how informative political campaigns would be if all the parties and candidates had the possibility to bypass the traditional news media and communicate directly to a large proportion of the electorate.

The Internet and Social Networking Sites (SNS) or social media arise in this context as an important instrument for political parties and candidates to bypass the traditional media and easily reach voters, presenting their ideas and positions directly to them at a relatively small cost. I argue in this thesis that most of the literature that studies the role of the Internet in political campaigns, by focusing almost exclusively on the interactive features or dialogic communication aspects of Internet (which allows a two-way communication and interaction between political actors and citizens) or the potential of new technologies for targeting voters, might be somehow neglecting the potential of *institutional communication* made on the

Internet as perhaps an opportunity to produce more informative and less conflict/strategy-driven campaigns.

More precisely, the development of Web 2.0 and the popularity of the SNS, transformed the Internet into a *push medium* (Maarek, 2011, p.158), and considerably increased the number of passive recipients of the parties' and candidates' campaign messages on the Internet. The Social Networking Sites, with their unique characteristics, can be used by political actors in their campaigns as their personal newspaper and television channel. As Trechsel¹ notes, "The "News Feed" page on Facebook, for instance, might gradually become the modern newspaper." On the SNS the candidates and parties are considerably less dependent on the traditional media's commercial logic and can convey inexpensively and directly to a broad and diverse audience the aspects they find relevant throughout their campaign. With the arrival and popularity of these social media, the political actors' audience on the Internet is no longer exclusively composed by journalists and more politically sophisticated or interested citizens, but a large share of the electorate that candidates expect to inform, mobilize and even persuade.

In light of these developments, the research question of this dissertation is: How informative are the unmediated electoral campaigns made on the SNS, in comparison to their traditional news coverage? Or framed differently, to what extent is the media logic and agenda of traditional mass media hindering the electoral competitors from producing more informative and less conflict-driven campaigns? We are interested in seeing to what extent the electoral campaigns of political parties and candidates are distorted in the news coverage made by journalists and the traditional media. The objective of the dissertation is to compare the electoral campaigns made by the political parties and candidates on the SNS with the traditional news media coverage of those campaigns.

There are reasons for us, as already briefly mentioned, to expect significant differences between these two media. On the one hand, the television and press rely on the appeal of their stories to win viewers and readers. On the other hand, the dynamic and unmediated campaigns on the social media give parties and candidates an opportunity to present issues and aspects to the public that they really want to see discussed in the campaign. In other words, the SNS allow the politicians to frame their own campaigns. If the journalists are indeed, as the literature suggests, distorting the campaigns in their news coverage, we have reasons to expect that aspects such as Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict to be less salient in

¹ A. Trechsel (forthcoming). *Towards a Paparazzi Democracy*.

SNS campaigns while the discussion of substantive political issues should be more frequent. However, as we saw, modern campaign strategies, which are adapted to contexts of higher social complexity and grounded in mass marketing principles only concerned with winning votes, may deter the political actors from producing more informative campaigns, even on those unmediated communication channels.

Based on this problem, this thesis develops and tests two sets of competing hypothesis: the *Uninformative News* and the *Hollow Campaigns*. The first hypothesis expects, on the one hand, that the traditional media actually present a distorted picture of the real campaigns. In this case, the most salient aspects in the traditional media should be considerably different from the aspects emphasized by the parties and candidates in their online campaigns. More concretely, we expect that the salience of some media frames (i.e. Strategy/Horse-Race; Conflict and Scandal) to be higher in the news coverage of the campaigns in comparison to the content offered by the parties and candidates on the SNS. Additionally, we also expect that the salience of substantive political issues will be higher on the SNS compared to the press. For the second hypothesis, on the other hand, we expect the opposite so that the traditional coverage of elections will be similar to the candidates' and parties' campaigns on social media. In other words, the low salience that substantive political issues have in the traditional media will mostly result from the fact that parties and candidates refrain from discussing them in their own campaigns.

These hypotheses are tested with data collected from four electoral campaigns (U.S. 2012, Italy 2015, Brazil 2014 and Portugal 2015). For each election, two broadsheet newspapers and the Twitter, Facebook and YouTube accounts of the main candidates or parties were analyzed during the four weeks before the election-day. This data was systematically and manually analyzed using a codebook adapted for its purpose. By employing a deductive approach it was identified in each article, message and video the presence of a pre-determined set of generic media frames related to political events. In total, 16,477 different items, from the press and SNS, were analyzed in this work.

Despite some differences between countries and parties and candidates, the results of this analysis strongly supported the *Uninformative News* hypothesis. The differences between SNS and the traditional media were particularly big in respect to the salience of conflict and political scandals. These two aspects were considerably more salient in the news coverage of the election than in the parties' and candidates' social media campaigns. In this respect the press clearly overstated the importance that those aspects had in the campaign of the parties. Furthermore, even though there were considerable differences between campaigns, the

discussion and conveyance of substantive political issues was overall consistently more frequent in the SNS than in the press. From the three SNS analyzed, YouTube offered the most informative campaign in this regard.

These results give two positive indications for the future of democracy and democratic participation. The first positive sign is that it was confirmed that parties and candidates do try, to some extent, to discuss substantive political issues in their campaigns. The most worrying result of this analysis would be that parties and candidates actually avoided discussing substantive political issues in their campaigns. The results in general did not confirm such a scenario although there were a few examples of extremely uninformative campaigns. In some cases the issues' discussion was indeed the aspect most prioritized by the parties and candidates in their online messages. For this reason, as the SNS become increasingly more popular as the time goes by and people increasingly start to use it to look for political information (Towner & Munoz, 2016), we can expect that political issues will eventually become more salient in future campaigns, which might also lead to more informed citizen participation.

The second positive sign is that the salience of Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal Frames is, overall, lower on the SNS. In other words, we can expect that those three aspects, which contribute to increasing the citizen's political cynicism and reducing their sense of political efficacy, will over time become less prominent in electoral campaigns. Authors in the beginning of this century suggested that the Internet had the potential to repair the citizens' low levels of trust in the democratic institutions, which had been negatively affected by mainstream journalism and negative television advertisement. Those authors were mostly preoccupied with the interactive features and dialogic communication enabled by the Internet. The results presented in this thesis suggest that the institutional communication that the Internet and the SNS allow has also the potential to contribute to that goal.

This thesis is divided in nine chapters, including this one with a brief introduction. The second chapter consists of a review of the literature and the discussion and development of the main puzzle explored in this thesis. That chapter is divided in two sections. The first section one focuses on the traditional media and the news coverage of political events. It examines the concept of media frames, the aspects that are most salient in the news coverage of elections and their impact on the citizens' political attitudes. It also discusses why both journalists and political actors might be responsible for the less informative, and more conflict/strategy-driven, news coverage of elections. The second section focuses on the Internet, its potential for political communication, some prominent examples of Internet-based

political campaigns, and how the SNS have circumvented some of the limitations of the Internet for political communication and turned it into a truly *push medium*.

The third chapter presents and discusses the hypothesis of this research and describes the methodology used to test them. Chapters four to seven present and discuss the results of the analyses made for all of the four electoral campaigns (U.S. 2012, Brazil 2013, Italy 2014 and Portugal 2015). Each chapter firstly presents the analysis of the news coverage of that election and what were the most salient aspects in the campaign. After that, the chapters include the analysis of the SNS campaign of the main parties and candidates in that election. Finally the chapter offers a comparison between the news coverage and the SNS campaign in that specific election. The seventh chapter offers, using the data from the four elections, a comparison between types of media, elections and candidates and parties regarding the aspects that were more salient in the campaign. The ninth and final chapter sums up the main results and contributions of this work.

Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 – Media Framing of Politics and its Effect on Democracy.

The importance of mass media and its persuasive power was not always consensual among academics during the 20th century (McQuail, 1979). In the first decades of the last century, the media were considered to have a powerful effect in shaping peoples' beliefs and behavior. However, between the 1940s and 1960s, researchers increasingly started to share the conviction that the effect of the media in audiences was highly reduced most probably, as Bartels (1993) suggests, as a consequence of some methodological problems and poorly made research designs of some of the studies. Nevertheless, this conviction started to change again in the 1970s (see Iyengar et al., 1982) and today it seems reasonable to argue that citizens' perception of the world is largely created and continuously re-shaped by the content transmitted in mass media, which is nowadays, even though increasingly challenged², the societies' main source of information. As Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p.56) put it, "if you have never traveled to Russia or talked at length with someone who has, most of what you know about that country – your 'social' reality of that country – comes from the mass media". The conviction, in the beginning of this new century, according to the modern academic research on media effects, is that citizens' perceptions are shaped not only by which stories are presented in the media but also by *the way* those are conveyed (Shah et al., 2009).

Regarding modern political elections, mass media undoubtedly play a crucial role in conveying political information to citizens and for this reason are fundamental tools in modern political communication (see Statham, 2007). The informational role of the media, transmitting the messages and political positions of political actors to the electorate, becomes even more relevant in a context where the bonds between citizens and parties are increasingly weakening (Katz & Mair, 1995; Biezen, 2004), with direct contact between citizens and political candidates during political elections being considerably lower nowadays. Moreover, the mass media have also profoundly transformed the way parties campaign. Political parties became less concerned about mobilizing their increasingly lower number of partisans and more interested in persuading a large segment of the electorate (Farrell & Webb, 2000, p.105) that is also progressively becoming more volatile (see Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000, 263).

² Almost four-in-ten of the Americans got, in 2012, news online or on a mobile phone (Pew Research Center (2012) "In Changing newslandscape, even television is vulnerable: trends in news consumption: 1991–2012").

However, as Walter Lippmann explores in his seminal work *Public Opinion*, the influential power of the mass media becomes problematic when the *pictures in the audiences' heads* start to differ considerably from the *world outside*. As this author points out, the truth and media generated news “are not the same thing, and must be clearly distinguished” (Lippmann, 1921, p. 331). Some examples of media selection and distortion of reality include the considerable increase of violence and aggressive behavior portrayed in the mass media, or the marginalization of some deviant groups or individuals in news reports (see Shoemaker and Reese, 1996). As Ansolabehere et al. (1993) observe the media do not reflect the reality in their selection of events to report, but rather selection is influenced by the preferences and constraints of journalists and news editors. A good example was the failed attempts of the reporter Bill Blakemore to persuade his superiors to report and air a story about the famine in Ethiopia in 1984, which was killing thousands and threatening millions because, as he frustratingly put it, “there are people dying, but they’re only black” (Blakemore cited in Ansolabehere et al., 1993, p.50).

There are three important and well-studied approaches, or effects, that the media can employ when covering politics to re-shape the audiences’ perceptions of the events. These three effects are *agenda-setting*³, *priming*⁴ and *media framing*. While the first two result from the presence and visibility of some events and topics in the news and affect the importance the audience attributes to them (see McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987), the framing effect is more subtle and is not concerned with *which* issues are presented to the public but *how* they are presented (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Although all three of these mechanisms are important for understanding the impact of the media on the audience’s perceptions and evaluations of specific events (e.g. the agenda-setting can increase the public interest or support for a specific policy issue, while priming can affect the support for a specific candidate or politician), this work focuses on media framing. The study of media framing is essential, as Berganza (2009) points out, for anyone interested in understanding the content of the media and its impact on public perceptions because, as we will see, the frames

³ The theory that media have the capacity set the agenda in political campaigns (i.e. which issues are considered relevant and discussed) by giving more salience to some issues while neglecting others. As Bernard Cohen put it, the media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about” (Cohen, 1963, p.13).

⁴ The idea that the way public evaluates the performance of governments and political actors depends on the aspects of national life most salient in media. As Iyengar & Kinder (1987, p.63) put it, “by calling attention to some matters while ignoring others, television news influences the standards by which governments, presidents, policies, and candidates for public office are judged”.

chosen by the journalist to report political events can have an impact on the public's attitudes towards politics.

The concept of media framing is closely associated with the influential work of Kahneman & Tversky (1984), which showed that individual preference for a specific resolution can be changed by the way a problem is presented. Entman (1993, p. 53) describes framing as a process of selecting and highlighting "some bits of information" related to some issue or event and, as a consequence, "making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences". Using frames is essentially to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretations, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Framing must not be confused with persuasion that "takes place when a communicator effectively revises the content of one's beliefs about the attitude object, replacing or supplementing favorable thoughts with unfavorable ones, or vice versa" (Nelson & Oxley, 1999, pp. 1040-41).

According to Gamson & Modigliani (1989, p.3), the "media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretative packages that give meaning to an issue" and those packages have a central idea, or frame, that suggest what is relevant in the news story. The frame is, consequently, the "central organizing idea or story that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, p. 143), which will help the audience to "locate, perceive, identify, and label" all the information flowing around (Goffman, 1974, p.21). To put it simply, media frames are "an emphasis in salience of some aspects of a topic" (de Vreese, 2003, p.27)⁵. So, when reporting a political campaign, the journalist can highlight different aspects in her news article such as the candidate's policy preferences and pledges, the candidate's attack on opponents or even the candidate's performance and enthusiasm during the speech. What the literature is suggesting is that the traditional media, especially the press and the television, have some specific *generic news frames*⁶ that they consistently use to report political events.

The literature has shown us that when covering political events, the press and the television started in the last quarter of the twentieth century to increasingly use a *strategy* and *horse-race frame* (which highlights aspects such as the parties' and candidates' strategies, their actions to gain political advantage, which candidate is winning or losing and their

⁵ See also Neuman et al. (1992, p.60) and Druckman (2001) for more information about the concept of framing.

⁶ See de Vreese (2003, p.30) or read the second chapter of this dissertation for the distinction between *issue-specific news frames* and *generic news frames*.

positions in the opinion polls), instead of focusing on substantive political issues such as the candidates' positions on relevant political subjects, known as *policy coverage* (Patterson, 1993) or *issue coverage* frame (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Journalists have apparently become more concerned with the race *per se*, making use of war and sport expressions, stressing the style and personality of political candidates and the strategy behind political actors in order to gain political advantage (Jamieson, 1992; Nord and Strömbäck, 2006; Weaver, 1972) or simply the way candidates campaign (Norris et al., 1999, p. 74). Already towards the end of the sixties, while analyzing the media coverage of the American presidential campaign of 1969, McCombs & Shaw (1972, p.179) found that “a considerable amount of campaign news was *not* devoted to discussion of the major political issues but rather to *analysis of the campaign itself*”. Consequently, opinion polls addressing aspects such as party or candidate sympathy are also becoming a pivotal feature of the news coverage of electoral campaigns today.

As stated by Ansolabehere & Iyengar (1995, p. 38), the media can be perceived to “devote far more attention to the details, however sordid, of the candidates' personal lives and to the horse-race and conflictual aspects of the campaign than to matters of public policy”. Conflict is, apparently, another aspect that the media appear to stress, and which, according to Devitt (1997), tends to be more salient when the news stories also emphasize the horse-race and strategy of the campaign. Several studies have confirmed the prominence of the *Conflict Frame* in the press and television news coverage of political events (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Simon, 2006). Besides the lack of political issues information and the salience of campaign maneuver, conflict, and winning or losing, the tone of the news stories towards political actors is also becoming increasingly more negative (Graber, 1976; Rozell, 1994; Cappella & Jamieson, 1996).

There are, however, differences between the types of media. According to the literature, the salience of conflict and horse-race aspects tends to be less prominent in the press, in comparison to the television news coverage. Despite sharing some common characteristics (for example, they are both push mediums where the audience has little control of the information they receive), the television and the press have distinctive roles and audiences. The television, with its sound and visual component, has a bigger entertaining role compared to the press, where long texts are better suited to convey more substantive and detailed information. While the televisions' audience is broader and more diverse, the press's audience is usually politically and economically more sophisticated, allowing the press to present more detailed and complex news reports (Kevin, 2008). For this reason, television

news programs are more likely to emphasize strategy/horse-race and conflict aspects, and less likely to discuss substantive political issues, in comparison to newspapers (Graber, 1976; Patterson, 1993). Additionally, there is also a preference of television for more personalized, dramatized, episodic and less issue-oriented style of coverage, making their news more repetitive and uniform in comparison to newspaper articles (Weaver, 1972).

However, this difference regarding the types of frames used by television and press in the news coverage of political events is becoming less noticeable. According to Patterson (1993), this difference has been diminishing since television strategies to report political events also started to influence the press news coverage of those events. Apparently, as Druckman (2005) points out, today's television and press news coverage of politics vary more drastically in terms of quantity (the visibility it gets on the news media) than in terms of content (the types of frames used and the topics reported). Similarly, Newton (1999) also found, by testing the *mobilization* and *media malaise* hypotheses, that it is the content present in the media that mostly matters, rather than the type of media (television or newspaper).

Most of the literature studying media frames observed this salience of strategy and conflict in the news coverage of politics is focused on the U.S. case. Patterson (1993) even refers to an exceptionalism of the American press. However, this trend in the coverage of politics apparently is not (at least anymore) strictly an American phenomenon. Authors have been referring to a gradual Americanization of the media of different countries, with this "American" style of news convergence being most visible in Europe (see Hallin & Mancini, 2004). This style of news coverage (the emphasis on strategy aspects, instead of issue-policy frames) also dominates the coverage of second-order elections, like the European Parliament elections (Jalali & Silva, 2011). This trend of reporting politics becomes relevant since it appears to have a negative effect on the media's audience.

What impact does the use of the strategy, horse-race and conflict frames, rather than the policy/issue coverage frame, have on democracy? We can identify two main detrimental effects on audiences of this style of news coverage. The first negative impact is that it makes the news less informative and consequently, considering the already mentioned importance of mass media as people's main knowledge providers, generates less informed citizens. This happens not only because there is less attention devoted by the journalists, in the newspapers and broadcast news programs, to policy issues (where politicians sound-bites⁷ become shorter and shorter) but also because the presence of strategy, horse-race and conflict aspects in the

⁷ Sound bites are "brief segments of news reports that show the candidates speaking" (Ansolabehere et al., 1993, p. 59).

news makes the audience less attentive to the issue information that the news story may also contain (Rhee, 1997; Valentino et al. 2001).

It is worth mentioning that the notoriety of alternative sources of information, such as the Voting Advice Applications (platforms that match citizens' policy preference with parties' political positions), may attenuate this detrimental effect. The implosion of these types of applications enormously reduces the citizens' cost for getting political information (Alvarez et al., 2012), and in some cases also offers the politicians' statements that authenticate their political stances (Trechsel & Mair, 2011). This, however does not diminish the importance of the traditional media's role as disseminators of political information. The news media not only remain the main source for citizens to acquire political information but they also allow citizens to be persuaded by the debate going on between candidates and the candidates' arguments to support a particular policy.

For both mandate and accountability representation in modern democracy, it is crucial for the electorate to be informed about politicians' positions on relevant issues, what they promise and their actions and achievements (see Naurin, 2011). Only with that information can citizens select and vote for the candidate that best represents their interests or punish politicians when their work is unsatisfactory. As Iyengar and Kinder (1987, p.3) point out, "the health and vitality of any democratic government depends in part on the wisdom of ordinary citizens". Since few voters read party manifestos, and direct contacts with parties are increasingly unusual, the democratic role of the news media become crucial. In fact, political parties aim their party manifestos or electoral programs towards an elite which includes journalists (Dolezal et al., 2012, p. 891). For this reason, it is important that journalists inform citizens about party political standings, control their actions, and inform the electorate when politicians fail to do their job (the journalists' watchdog role).

The second effect of emphasizing strategy, horse-race and conflict is the negative impact on audiences' attitudes towards politics⁸. Even though some authors argue that neither the way political candidates campaign (Bartels, 1992), nor how the media report political events (Scheufele, 2000), have a substantial effect on citizens' attitudes towards politics, other authors share a different opinion (Cappella & Jamieson, 1996; de Vreese, 2004a; Ansolabehere et al., 1994). For these authors, this type of coverage increases the audiences'

⁸ Although the main conviction in literature is that media coverage and type of frames used have an impact on the audience (see e.g. Devitt, 1997; Nelson & Oxley 1999; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004; Berinsky & Kinder, 2006) there are also contradictory standings (see Scheufele, 2000).

political cynicism⁹ (lack of trust in political actors), by portraying the politicians as controversial and conflicting individuals that only care about gaining power and winning in politics and reduces their sense of political efficacy¹⁰. Additionally, the use of those frames, according to de Vreese (2003; 2004b), inspires, in the public, negative evaluations of the political events reported by journalists.

The experimental studies of Cappella & Jamieson (1997, p.205) support this hypothesis by showing that individuals' cynical evaluations of politics are 'activated' when news pieces emphasize strategy and winning or losing in elections. Similarly, also Mutz & Reeves (2005) found that conflict, more specifically the uncivil discourse of politicians, is associated with lower levels of citizens' political trust. This study suggests that what matters is not the existence of disagreement, which is inevitable in electoral campaigns, but the abusive tone of political discussions. According to Trippi (2008, 40), the attacks between candidates are the reason for American citizens' political cynicism because they "cause people to react viscerally, not just to the person they're aimed at, but to politicians as a whole", and the only way to reach the disengaged and cynical electorate is "to go even *more negative*". The use of these frames (strategy, horse-race and conflict) appears to detach the public from the political process, and even reduces, as Valentino et al. (2001) showed, the audiences' intention of casting a vote, particularly among less educated individuals and those less attached to political parties.

According to Jamieson (1992) and Patterson (1993), by depicting politics merely as a conflictual race, the media implicitly (or sometimes even explicitly) suggest that the motivations behind political actors' actions are essentially self-centered and, on occasion, even deceivable or dishonest. Additionally, this framing effect apparently occurs in other contexts besides electoral campaigns (Elenbaas & de Vreese, 2008) and when the news pieces also address substantive political information (Valentino et al., 2001). It is, however, important to point out that the audience is not totally passive and equally susceptible to be influenced by the media frames that journalists use (Lecheler & de Vreese, 2010; Rhee 1997). As Valentino et al. (2001) show with experimental methods, framing effects are, to some extent, mediated by citizens' political sophistication and involvement, with more educated and politically involved individuals relying less on journalists' cues and context to place received information.

⁹ For the definition of political cynicism see Miller et al. (1979); Dennis & Webster (1975) and Perloff & Kinsey (1992).

¹⁰ The sense of political efficacy can be understood, according to Pinkleton et al. (2002), as the conviction of a person that he or she can, with their efforts, influence and the political process and change the social outcomes.

Even though experimental research suggesting that these effects tend to disappear over time (de Vreese, 2003; 2004b), there are at least two reasons why we should not, nevertheless, neglect the impact of these effects. The first reason is that these reported negative effects, even if they are ephemeral, can still be ‘switched on’ during crucial political events, such as legislative elections. Said differently, the higher visibility of election campaigns on the media, framed in terms of strategy/horse-race and conflict, can have a short-term impact on the audiences’ political attitudes on election day. The second reason is that it is possible (even if it is more difficult to test in experimental settings) the existence of a cumulative effect that, with larger periods of exposure to these frames, would turn irreversible (or less easily reverted) the public’s political cynicism.

Despite being contested by some authors (Norris, 2011), some literature on democratic support in developed countries has claimed an erosion of citizens’ support towards political institutions in the last half of the twentieth century (Dalton, 2004). This decline of political support (and consequent increase of political cynicism) has been linked to the rise of television or changes in journalistic style (increasingly more interpretative and strategy/conflict oriented) which gave rise to a *video malaise* hypothesis (Robinson, 1976). Later studies of this relationship have been somehow inconclusive and contradictory. On the one hand, some authors found very doubtful the relationship between media consumption and political cynicism (Dalton, 2004, p.74; Holtz-Bacha, 1990; Bennett et al., 1999), or even support a mobilization effect of some types of media consumption (Newton, 1999, Norris 2000). On the other hand, some authors found that the exposure to media news of individuals with high levels of trust (Avery, 2009), more politically sophisticated (de Vreese, 2005) and that prefer more commercial news programs (Saito, 2008), has a detrimental effect on the audiences’ political trust and sense of political efficacy. Despite the two opposing views on how responsible the mass media are for the citizens’ decline of political trust and political participation in general, we can nevertheless agree that the news media content matters. Issue-policy framed news, instead of strategy/conflict framed ones, are more informative to the audiences and, for reasons discussed already, are less likely to undermine the citizens’ sense of political efficacy and political trust.

In sum, by reducing the level of information that citizens might receive, the uninformed, negative and strategy/horse-race focused coverage can make the voters formulate imprecise judgments, increase political cynicism among citizens, reduce their sense of political efficacy and, ultimately, it might also reduce elections’ turnout, since, as Graber (1976, p.301) observes, the voter’s choices become “even more difficult because they must be

made between lesser evils”. Of course, considering these effects on citizen’s attitudes, this brings the question of why Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames (instead of a Policy/Issues Frame) dominate the traditional media coverage of electoral campaigns? There are two possible explanations. One reason is that the media are, in fact, distorting the campaigns, neglecting the political issues raised by the candidates and parties and focusing instead on less relevant aspects for the electorate. The second explanation is that the media coverage is simply reflecting the increasingly less informative and more strategic campaigns made by political actors. The next two sections discuss these perspectives.

2.2 – *Why would the mass media distort the campaigns?*

There are several reasons that can explain why reality is shaped by the media in their news reports. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p. 6), in the traditional media, content can be shaped by (i) the journalists’ beliefs, (ii) media practices and (iii) outside forces and institutions. We can find support for all these three hypotheses in the literature. Regarding the first aspect, some authors argue that the main reason for the media to distort the campaigns in the news is the journalists’ misperception of what politics and elections are about (Patterson, 1993; Lloyd, 2004). According to Patterson (1993), the journalists make use of a *game schema*¹¹ when reporting on political events. The idea is that, unlike citizens who see elections as an opportunity to choose among the various candidates the right person to solve their problems, journalists see politics only as a strategic game where candidates compete to gain personal advantages, being able to do anything in order to win. This perception is also shared by John Lloyd who argues that journalists decided that “politics is a dirty game, played by devious people who tell an essentially false narrative about the world” and deceive citizens (Lloyd 2004, p.20). Simply put, from this perspective, the journalists do not trust political actors. That cynicism will be reflected in the news they make and, ultimately, that distrust will be spread to citizens. Additionally, the focus on horse-race rather than policy issues might be an outcome of the journalists’ effort to avoid the politicians’ manipulation and ensure their own independence (Swanson & Mancini, 1996; p.252). However, this hypothesis is challenged by the work of Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p.98) who did not find any major differences between journalists and ordinary people that could considerably affect media content. They only found that journalists are on average more

¹¹ The schema “is a cognitive structure that a person uses when processing new information and retrieving old information” (Patterson, 1993, p.56).

educated, which in a way contradicts this *game schema* hypothesis since the level of education appears to be positively correlated with trust in political actors (Agger et al., 1961). Furthermore, Brants et al. (2009) found, in a series of surveys conducted in the Netherlands, that political cynicism is in fact lower among journalists, compared to ordinary citizens. Overall, even though this *game schema* hypotheses might be very appealing to explain the media's distortion of political events, one cannot find very strong empirical support for it in the literature.

The salience of strategy and conflict can also be the result of organizational practices of the media. One example is the need of the newspapers and broadcast news programs to always find new material. While candidates' political positions and issues discussed usually do not vary considerably, the game in the elections is more dynamic and a better source for journalists to rely on (Patterson, 1993). Also, according to Nord & Strömbäck (2006), news stories about strategy and conflict are easier to report, requiring considerable less investigative work than news about political issues, and will better suit the number of commentators and experts that the news media increasingly make use of. The use of conflict and strategy frames also facilitates the journalists' decision of how to present the story to the public, by automatically giving some level of "newsworthiness" to the piece (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; de Vreese, 2003). The absence of relevant political issues in the coverage of political elections can also be due to an attempt by the media to provide balanced coverage to all parties. Being the media and therefore obliged to give equal or proportional visibility to all political contenders, in some cases journalists might have to create news pieces even if nothing relevant was said or happened that day.

Finally, economic and market forces also appear to have a relevant impact in the media coverage of political campaigns. The referred change in the media style of reporting political campaigns might be the outcome of a transformation in the news media where a 'party logic' gave way to a 'public logic' and then to a 'media logic' (Mazzoleni, 1987; Brants & Praag, 2006). The arrival of this media logic, which "coincided with the appearance and growth of commercial television, with its consumerist idea of giving the public what it wants", passed to the media "the power to define who and what is politically relevant" (Brants & Praag, 2006, p. 30). The result is an arena "characterized by the conflict between market and democratic principles, where media presentation of issues are distorted to gain attention, rather than provide information" (Savigny, 2002, p. 1), where the media are no longer subservient to politicians' ideals, as they were in the 'party logic' and journalists do not work

for the ‘public good’ as society’s watchdogs controlling the politicians’ actions, as they did in the ‘public logic’.

When the media start to depend on advertising money, the loyalty of the audience becomes crucial. As Lippmann (1921) observed, the consumer “will pay a nominal price when it suits him, will stop paying whenever it suits him, will turn to another paper when that suits him. Somebody has said quite aptly that the newspaper editor has to be re-elected every day.” For that reason, the news media become less information-providers and become more entertainment-providers. If the public finds policy issues complicated or tedious, the media will focus on the exciting aspects of who is winning and losing and the candidates’ campaign strategies. If the audience doesn’t trust politicians, the media will depict them as hostile and controversial individuals. Following this logic, also differences between the media (public vs. private and tabloid vs. broadsheet) and the importance of the covered political events should influence the frames used in the news (Nord & Strömbäck, 2006; Strömbäck & Nord, 2008). Paradoxically, as Mutz & Reeves (2005, p.13) contend, even though citizens condemn politicians’ attacks and uncivil behavior, they are nevertheless drawn to that kind of content in journalist pieces. In sum, as Bennett (1997, p.109) puts it, “the economic pressures on journalists may run against the professional ideal by encouraging political coverage that is easier and cheaper to report as well as easier and less challenging for consumers to digest”. The media’s ownership, being private or public, is another factor contributing to the trivialization in the news coverage of elections (Patterson, 1993; Nord & Strömbäck, 2006), being the public media apparently less entertainment oriented and more informative (Peter et al., 2004).

The responsibility of the messenger is not crystal clear, however. The literature equally suggests that the politicians might be also responsible for the lack of issues and the focus on strategy and conflict in the news coverage of political campaigns. According to this argument, the increasingly professionalized campaigns are becoming more and more strategic and negative, and are ruled by marketing principles that are less concerned with the discussion of political issues. The next section explores this position.

2.3 – Modern political campaigning.

It is possible that accusations of a lack of interest in policy issues by the traditional media are, to some extent, unfair or exacerbated and that the news coverage of political campaigns may in fact reflect, with very little distortion, the actual political campaigns. The

conflict and lack of information in political campaigns are not a new phenomenon. More than two thousand years ago Quintus Cicero advised his older brother Marcus, who was running for the highest elected office of Roman Republic, to put on a colorful and spectacular show that “appeals so much to the crowds”; to remind the voters that his opponents were scoundrels and to smear them “at every opportunity with the crimes, sexual scandals, and corruption they have brought on themselves”; and, finally, to “not make specific pledges” but, instead, to “stick to vague generalities” (Cicero, 2012, pp.77-79). However, the increasing fragmentation of society, the professionalization of political campaigns and the development of mass media have apparently made modern campaigns even more about visuals and less about substance. Similarly, Kahn & Kenney (1999) noted that substantive political issues became largely absent in the U.S. Senate elections. According to these authors, on average, candidates only emphasize issues in 36 percent of their campaign ads and, when they do so, they only clearly position themselves on those discussed issues half of the time (Kahn & Kenney, 1999, p.238). Concerning the nature of the issues, Kahn & Kenney (1999, p.238) also state that only less than a third of the time were the issues addressed by the candidates' crucial aspects “representing the most intractable problems facing the nation”.

According to Newman (1999), the mass marketing strategies adopted in modern campaigns, and not the media, are the true culprits for citizens' political cynicism. We can find in literature at least seven aspects that may contribute towards the lack of substantive political issues in the campaigns. The first one is the increasing complexity and fragmentation of societies, which is reducing the citizens' attachment to political parties and is also observed, to some extent, in the declining membership of political parties (Biezen et al. 2011). The target audience of political parties' campaigns are no longer “fixed social categories” that political parties historically had to mobilize but a large share of an unattached and volatile electorate that parties nowadays have to persuade (Farrell & Webb, 2000, p.105). In this scenario, in order not to alienate the electorate, candidates might prefer to avoid and not discuss relevant political issues (Graber, 1976), especially if they already have high levels of public support of voting intentions (Maarek, 2012, p.47) – a strategy that can become even more salient as opinion polls become more refined and common. A way to do that is by resorting to personalization strategies that can be used, according to Kriesi (2004, p.199), “to distract attention from political issues”. A good example of this strategy was Chancellor Angela Merkel's 2009 parliamentary campaign where, according to Maarek (2011, p.47), “she communicated as little as possible, to the dismay of her party, because she felt that her strong personal popularity lead over her opponents made it useless and even dangerous for her

personal success to undertake any stronger kind of campaigning”. Besides being a strategy, the increasing presidentialization (Poguntke & Webb, 2005) or personalization (McAllister, 2007) of politics can also be a cause of the lack of issues in campaigns as parties become more dependent on politicians' traits rather than political programs.

A second aspect, to some extent connected, is the development of catch-all parties and the convergence of parties' policy standings (Thomas, 1980; Katz & Mair, 1995; Mair, 2008). Having fewer issues distinguishing themselves, parties must find other ways to appeal to the electorate. As Mair (2013, p.83) put it, “party-voter distances have become more stretched, while party-party differences have shrunk, with both processes combining to reinforce a growing popular indifference to parties and, potentially to the world of politics in general”. Furthermore, the dominant role of political parties as intermediaries between citizens and governments, aggregating citizens' preferences and being their representatives, was challenged and is now making political parties rely less on the “compellingness of their programs” and more on the “appeal of individual candidates” in order to “sustain their nominal prominence in the minds of most citizens” (Schmitter, 2001, p.84). Additionally, Schmitter (2001) also notes that the political protagonism lost by political actors is being taken, more or less successfully, by interest associations and social movements that address single issues. As van Biezen & Poguntke (2014, p.215) put it, interest groups nowadays "offer an alternative, if not directly challenge, to the process of interest intermediation provided by parties". Overall, it is possible that the increasing importance and success of these intermediate organizations in debating their founding issues is somehow hollowing the political parties' issues-repertoire in campaigns.

The third aspect is the increasing unpredictability of the problems that a government might face, a “consequence of the growing economic interdependence” that discourages the “candidates to make detailed promises” (Manin, 1997, p. 220). According to this view, the mutation and increasing complexity of the countries' socio-economic realities, which render the future more unforeseeable, make it more difficult for parties (at least the ones with real expectations of forming a government) to maintain their previous plans and fulfill their promises. The risk of being labeled untrustworthy, ineffective or incompetent to any successful party and candidate that aspires to maintain its office might deter that party and candidate from formulating a broader and more detailed discourse during the campaign.

The fourth aspect is the external and internal constraints that political parties face nowadays (Mair, 2009), which limits the political options of elected officials and, naturally, the range of their campaign promises. A good example is the transfer of executive and

legislative competences from the national level to supranational organizations (e.g. European integration process). A further example is the bailout agreements made between insolvent countries and international organizations (like the IMF) that impose specific policies and objectives on those countries.

The fifth aspect is the increasing importance of money in some electoral campaigns. The candidates' constant pursuit of money not only gives them "little time for other important activities such as learning about issues, meeting with ordinary citizens, and formulating policy proposals" (Ansolabehere et al., 1993, p.70) but also might deter them from taking some political position that might push away potential contributors. The U.S. elections are a particular, and almost certainly the most illustrative, example of the importance of money in modern politics. Not only the competence and quality of candidates is recurrently linked to the amount of money they can raise (especially in primary elections, when less substantive aspects differentiate the competitors) but also the outcome of most elections depends heavily on the money that is spent on television advertisement, which amounts to the major share of the candidates' campaign budgets. Nevertheless, the contemporary proliferation of different media and the professionalization of the campaigns transformed the almost every political election where fundraising is allowed.

The sixth aspect, which was explored by Kahn and Kenney (1999), concerns the uncertainty of the electoral outcomes. While the issues remain mainly absent in less disputed campaigns, when the incumbents' re-election is uncertain or there are no predicted winners the discussion of political issues becomes more salient. In this sense, the existence of opinion polls, which are now so popular in today's politics, can also act as a trigger for the salience and absence of issues in political campaigns.

Finally, the logic of the mass media might also have an impact on the campaign made by political actors, who depend on the media to reach the electorate. The commercial imperatives that rule the traditional news media, with their own agenda, produce changes in the political parties who adopt more scenic and cosmetic approaches to politics, in order to become more attractive to journalists and gain more visibility (Blumler, 1990; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999), condensing their rhetoric to "attention-getting phrases and catchy punch lines that symbolize their campaign", which are more suitable for television and, consequently, have better chance of appearing in the news (Ansolabehere et al., 1993, p. 59). This situation is also known as the "mediatisation of politics", when the political parties and candidates "adapt their practices and messages to formats, deadlines, and genres that are journalistically attractive" (Skogerbø & Krumsvik, 2014, p.351).

The professionalization of political campaigns and its focus on personality rather than on political issues is connected to “the advent of television and more refined polling techniques” (Roper et al., 2004, p70). The need to adapt to the media appears to be even more relevant for the less powerful actors: “Less advantaged sources must conform to the media routines if they are to have a chance of getting into the news” (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p.132). Maybe as a consequence of this mediatization process, political candidates seem increasingly more concerned with entertainment (Newman, 1999). Music concerts and other artistic performances are nowadays a common feature in candidates and parties’ campaign rallies. Street (2004, p.437) distinguishes three ways for politicians to engage in popular culture. The first example is associated with entertainment stars in staged events. The second is to use non-traditional communication channels, like Obama’s interview on the Daily Show or Bill Clinton MTV’s saxophone performance. The third example is to adopt some celebrities’ common traits or borrow the expertise of people established in the entertainment business to conduct some of their campaign events.

Regarding the prominence of the Conflict Frame, it is also possible that attacks presented in the news media coverage of political elections simply reflect the negative campaign made by the political actors (Ansolabehere et al., 1994). The salience of conflict may be a consequence of candidates’ and parties’ strategies to reach and mobilize an audience increasingly discontent and disconnected from politics (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995), rather than a distortion by “blood-thirsty” mediators, especially in more disputed elections (Kahn & Kenney, 1999). Besides being the best strategy to reach the most uninterested and distrustful citizens, by attacking the opponent the candidate has supposedly a better chance to dissuade the opponent’s supporters and persuade the undecided voters.

We can distinguish three types of negative discourse that candidates can use in their campaigns to criticize their opponents: *issue-based*; *trait-based* and *value-based* (Geer, 2006, p.29). The *issue-based* attacks are the ones that focus on specific policy matters. The *trait-based* appeals focus on the personal attributes of the candidates and, finally, the *value-based* attacks draw attention to more generic themes without specifying any policy issue. While the *issue-based* attacks can nevertheless present voters with some information regarding the candidates’ political positions, the only aim of the other two attacks is to damage the image of the adversaries.

In sum, as shown in these last two sections, it is hard to identify which one of these two trends—the professionalization of campaigns or the functioning of the traditional media—has the major impact in shaping modern political communication and making the

citizens less informed and possibly more cynical. However, some studies start to give us an idea of how the level of control of the political message (the communication channel used) can affect the content of political campaigns (Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010; Walter & Vliegenthart, 2010; Jalali & Silva, 2011). According to these studies, although the political actors appear to have at least some influence over the content of the news, the messenger matters, with the media (press and television) re-framing the political campaigns by highlighting some aspects.

Nevertheless, considering the negative impact the conflict, strategy and uninformative campaigns have on democracy, more attention should be paid to the differences of political communication on diverse platforms. If in fact the media are distorting campaigns, in this technological era where the influence of the traditional media is being challenged by the Internet and social media (Meraz, 2009) there are two reasons to be optimistic about the future of political campaigning and the citizens' attitudes towards politics. Firstly, this means that politicians, to some extent, still try to convey to the electorate their own positions and pledges. Secondly, the rise of new media and new effective communication platforms might have a positive impact on democracy, making political communication to voters more informative and possibly reducing the political cynicism and increasing citizens' sense of political efficacy. In the next section I discuss the role of the Internet, and one specific type of Internet platform (the Social Networking Sites – SNS), in politics as well as the use, and the potential, of these online platforms for political communication.

2.4 – Internet and Democracy.

Originally developed by the U.S. Defense Department, the Internet, as a communication platform, differs considerably from the traditional broadcasting media in the sense that the dissemination of information is not exclusively controlled by one single party (Margolis et al. 1997, p.60). Due to its unique nature, the emergence of this medium raised expectations in sectors such as trade, education, entertainment and, perhaps more importantly, also democracy. With the communication power being equally shared by all individuals, this new medium had the potential to democratize the dissemination of, and access to, information. Not only did the Internet to a certain extent challenge the role of the traditional media and journalists as societies' main providers of information, but owing to the interactivity allowed in cyberspace it also opened the doors to new forms of civic and political engagement. Stromer-Galley (2000, p.41) identified and explored a total of six characteristics of the Internet that can contribute to a democratizing effect. These characteristics are the cost,

volume, directionality, speed, targeting and convergence with other media. However, in its early years, the Internet was only accessible to a limited sector of the population, namely those with higher incomes and more education, which hindered its ability to instigate new political agendas and in a way also moderated, as we will shortly see, the expectations regarding Internet's democratizing effects.

Since the early 1990s, scholars have been examining and forecasting the impact of the Internet on democracy, particularly on aspects related to political participation and inclusion. However, the role and impact of this medium on democracy has not been consensual in the literature. On the one hand, less enthusiastic scholars expected this new arena would inevitably reflect the same old politics (Resnick, 1999; Margolis et al. 1997; Margolis & Resnick, 2000), with the major parties enjoying more visibility on the Internet (Margolis et al., 2003; Small, 2008; Strandberg, 2009). This “normalization theory” argued that the Internet would share the same fate of the other media, with the contents being presented and selected by the same actors that ruled the conventional media (Margolis & Resnick, 2000) and could even end up widening the information gap between citizens (Davis, 1999; Norris, 2001). According to this vision, parties and candidates with less resources would continue to be less visible and the Internet would never create a level playing field for them. Furthermore, as long as socio-economic status remains a determinant factor for the use of Internet, this medium could not offer a more inclusive political discussion and participation. For this reason, some authors even argued that digital television would have a more profound impact in peoples' lives than the Internet (Locke, 1999, p.220).

Besides having a relatively minimal impact on politics, some authors also suggested that the Internet could even threaten or challenge democratic regimes. Together with other technologies, the Internet could bring about surveillance societies, where citizens become closely monitored and controlled by governments (Wheeler, 1997. p.232). This medium could also favor the growth of extremist parties by making them look more credible and bigger than they are in reality (Ward et al. 2008a) while affording them the opportunity to reach a larger audience. Overall, a large part of the literature forecasted that the Internet would have a small, and sometimes even negative, impact on democracy.

On the other hand, the more optimistic scholars expected the Internet, by making the information more cheap and accessible, would contribute at the very least to a better-informed society. Some authors argued that the Internet would have a profound impact on politics by waning mainstream parties' political dominance and leveling the playing field for small parties and candidates (Corrado, 1996; Gibson and McAllister, 2011; Koc-Michalska et al.,

2014). Similarly, there was also the expectation that the Internet would disrupt the power of some elites, or even authoritarian rulers, by undermining their control of conventional media channels (Hill, 2013, p.37). Overall, some characteristics of Internet, such as cost and speed, seem to make this medium an inherently democratizing technology (Stromer-Galley 2000, p.41). Indeed, the Internet has occasionally been perceived as an important catalyst for a democratization process (Hill, 2008; Mungiu-Pippidi & Munteanu 2009). The unique and novel characteristics of this medium could, according to some authors, even reinvent democracy itself (Wheeler, 1997 p. 201). However, as Putnam (2000, p.173) observes, most of this optimism regarding the impact of cyberspace and computer-mediated communication on democracy was mostly based on "hope and hype" than thorough research.

Even though the Internet was initially a “toy” of wealthy and educated white males (Howard, 2005), the ‘digital divide’ has decreased considerably in the last two decades, particularly in the more developed countries, as personal computers and smart phones become more publically accessible. In some countries, such as Luxembourg and the Netherlands, the percentage of individuals using the Internet has since 2010 been higher than 90 percent¹². In today’s times, it is virtually impossible to imagine a well-functioning world that is not connected to the Internet. Everyday people around the world use this medium to, among other things, communicate, shop, study, read the news, pay their bills, entertain themselves, use some public services and even, in some cases, vote for their favorite political candidates (Prosser & Krimmer, 2004; Trechsel, 2007 and Alvarez et al., 2009). The Internet has completely changed people's daily lives, companies' business models and public services' delivery.

Regarding a possible effect of the Internet usage on the citizens’ political engagement, the literature has once again been far from consensual (Graber, 1996; Wang, 2007). Some authors, such as Putnam (2000, p.180), highlight that this new medium, even though it has the potential to, is unlikely to reverse by itself the erosion of social capital and increase civic engagement. If it diverts citizens from civic activities and other forms of social interaction, the Internet can potentially even bolster citizens' civic and political disengagement. Nonetheless, some authors have found a positive correlation between Internet use and individuals’ interest in politics and internal political efficacy. The use of the Internet, particularly to read online news, appears to have a positive effect on civic and political engagement (Boulianne, 2009). Similarly, Bakker and de Vreese (2011) found that use of

¹²Statistics from the International Telecommunications Union (Percentage of individuals using the Internet 2000-2016).

Internet by young people, who are aged between 16 and 24, is positively associated with different forms of political participation, both online and offline. According to Kenski & Stroud (2006), the exposure to online information during presidential campaigns is positively and significantly associated with political efficacy, knowledge and participation. However, the associations between Internet use and political engagement appear to be, overall, relatively small despite being statistically significant (Colombo, Galais & Gallego, 2012).

Even though the actual impact of the Internet on citizens' political attitudes and participation is unclear, the Internet brought expectations for political communication during electoral campaigns. More in light with the puzzle of this research, the Internet was seen, by some politicians and campaign managers, as the long-awaited media that would repair the citizens' high, and increasing, political cynicism and low sense of political efficacy that had allegedly been caused by negative political advertisement and mainstream journalistic pieces (Trippi, 2008). Even though political candidates have adopted and made use of the Internet in their electoral campaigns since 1990s, it was in the beginning of this new millennium, particularly in the 2000 U.S. elections (Bimber & Davis, 2003), that this media became an important element of elections. Nowadays, it is unlikely that any major political party in democratic countries does not have a regularly updated web presence or that, as we will see, parties and candidates do not use the Internet in their electoral campaigns.

As a political communication tool, the Internet can serve different purposes and uses. Hooghe & Vissers (2008) distinguish three types of communication that candidates and parties can promote online: (i) "institutional communication", when the information is made only top-down by an institutional actor; (ii) "pure-interactive communication", when the discussion is made between ordinary citizens (for example on an Internet forum); and finally (iii) "institutional-interactive communication", when both institutional and non-institutional actors interact and communicate with each other. It is the last two communication aspects that distinguish the Internet from the conventional broadcasting media. For this reason, most of the expectations regarding the use of Internet for political communication and electoral campaigns are often related to the institutional-interactive and pure-interactive communication aspects of this medium.

Besides being itself a new arena for political communication, the Internet also broadens the ways and possibilities for political parties and candidates to improve and innovate their campaigns. Four aspects of the political campaigns, that have been identified and discussed in the literature, where this medium can have an important impact are related to: 1) political parties' fundraising; 2) political mobilization; 3) development of dialogic

relationships between political actors and citizens and, finally, 4) targeting. The next paragraphs briefly elaborate on these four aspects of electoral campaigns where the Internet can have an important impact.

Concerning the campaign funds, money inevitable plays an important role in modern political campaigns, even more so in countries, such as the U.S., that rely to a great extent on expensive television advertisement. Besides being a communication medium, the Internet, according to Boas (2008, p.20), is also an important platform for financial transactions. Nowadays, it is a common feature in the campaign websites of parties and candidates (when campaign fundraising is permitted) to have a section where users can make their money donations more easily. By facilitating political parties' and candidates' fundraising, the Internet could also, in theory, have an effect on the substance of political campaigns since it could adjust a system that, as Ansolabehere et al. (1993) put it:

rewards candidates who are willing and able to devote days to asking strangers for money. This means that they have little time for other important activities such as learning about issues, meeting with ordinary citizens, and formulating policy proposals. To put it simply, a candidate's schedule is driven largely by the pursuit of money and media.

This implies that the Internet, by making the pursuit of funds more effortless and a less central aspect in the campaigns of parties and candidates, can as such contribute to more informative electoral campaigns. Furthermore, the Internet also changed the paradigm of the type of donations that are made to political actors. Nowadays, with Obama's case¹³ being a good example, a considerable proportion of the parties' and candidates' campaign funds can come from large numbers of small donations made online rather a small number of very large contributions (Anstead & Chadwick 2008, p.67). For some authors, this is a change "truly worth celebrating" since it increases the amount of donations that are made as "pure expressions" of the citizens' political preferences rather than contributions that seek some "personal benefit in return" (Weintraub & Levine, 2009, pp.243-44). In this sense, the Internet not only makes the campaigns more inclusive since even small contributions, made by ordinary citizens, became more relevant in the campaigns of parties and candidates but it also

¹³ Presidential Candidates Are on Track For \$2 Billion, *The New York Times* (19/10/12)

reduces the risk of corruption or, at least, the political influence of wealthy donors. In addition to this, the mass donations done through the Internet can also level the playing field by increasing the campaign funds of smaller political actors since these online donations are mostly made based on the parties' and candidates' policy preferences rather than their likelihood of winning the election.

The political mobilization is another aspect of electoral campaigns that the Internet can potentially facilitate or improve. With physical distances becoming a trivial aspect in cyberspace, the Internet offers political parties and candidates new ways to inform, mobilize and interact with the electorate. The literature has shown that conventional methods of political mobilization (e.g. phone calls and canvassing) usually seek individuals through "rational prospecting" in order to maximize resources (Brady et al. 1999). As a result, campaigns are disproportionally more likely to contact individuals with a higher propensity to vote, which are usually individuals more interested in politics, with higher levels of education and a better socio-economic status (Brady et al. 1999; Abramson & Claggett, 2001). As a consequence, the conventional methods of political mobilization fail to lessen the political alienation and participation divide in modern democracies. This segregation problem can be potentially solved with the Internet.

Since it considerably reduces communication costs, the Internet presents political parties and candidates with an opportunity to reach and mobilize also the low-propensity voters. However, this expectation has not been confirmed for political mobilization that is made through electronic mail. The fact that unsolicited emails do not appear to mobilize individuals (Johnson & Krueger, 2012) and the candidates' and parties' fear that those emails can even result in voter backlash (Ward et al., 2003, p.19) is hindering the political actors from sending emails to citizens less interested in politics. Instead, political actors mostly contact citizens that willingly offered their email addresses to the campaigns. As a result, the political mobilization made through conventional methods and the one made through email on the Internet seem to have identical results in terms of the characteristics of individuals that are contacted by the campaign actors (Krueger, 2006).

Even though campaign emails and website content mostly reach supporters and the more politically sophisticated citizens, they are nevertheless important and continued to be used by the parties and candidates to recruit volunteers for the conventional mobilization methods, an aspect that remains crucial in modern electoral campaigns (Nielsen, 2012). Furthermore, different from the traditional media, the Internet is constantly changing and reinventing itself. Nowadays the email is just one of the numerous online tools that politicians

can use to contact and inform citizens. For example, according to Small et al. (2008), one of the biggest advantages of the Internet is allowing citizens, through 24-hour online broadcast channels, the opportunity to follow and experience the offline campaigns of the parties and candidates. In other words, the Internet can also be used by the parties and candidates as their own 'television' channel. For citizens that do not have direct contacts with the parties and candidates, these unmediated online videos are also an opportunity for them to feel closer and more involved in the electoral campaigns.

Besides offering new ways to contact and mobilize the electorate, the Internet also allows the development of dialogic relationships between political candidates and electorate (Kent & Taylor, 1998). With personal computers and Internet connections becoming more affordable and widespread, the great speed and increasing user-friendliness of the Web rendered the Internet a unique interactive characteristic: real-time Internet communication is now cheap and easy. As Klotz (2004, p.65) puts it, due to its “potential for interactivity on a mass level”, the candidates have on the Internet:

the potential not only to disseminate information to a mass audience but also receive a message from a mass audience. Hearing from voters can help the candidate understand the desires of the constituency. Further, the audience has the potential to communicate with other members of the audience through chats, listservs, and other forums. This can inspire voters to feel a connection with the campaign. Interactivity can be used to mobilize people for a rally or other campaign event.

This interaction between political actors and citizens allowed by the Internet has been already used by political actors, during electoral campaigns, to present and discuss electoral programs or to even test and improve campaign speeches (Trippi, 2008). Moreover, there have been two political parties—the Spanish Podemos and the Italian Five Star Movement—that to some extent conducted primary elections through the Internet (Mikola, 2017). Overall, the Internet broadened the opportunities and possibilities for citizens to become more informed about electoral campaigns of the political candidates and to actually contribute to them. The dialogic communication in cyberspace has therefore the potential to bring citizens and political actors closer together during electoral campaigns. This interaction can not only

foster the political interest and engagement of citizens but it can also, as we will see, considerably improve the campaigns of political candidates and parties.

Finally, the Internet facilitates targeted messaging since vast amounts of data can be easily collected, stored and filtered (Stromer-Galley, 2000, p.48). Different from most conventional media, on the Internet the political actors can adapt, for example, their online messages to the recipients' attachment level to the political actor (i.e. supporter, neutral and opponent), political engagement (i.e. politically mobilized, apathetic or distrustful) or other personal characteristics (e.g. age group, social status, ethnic origins). In order to do so, political candidates' webpages may ask visitors to fill out surveys, subscribe to newsletters, or, like Obama's campaign websites in 2008 and 2012, offer different constituency groups that people can join when entering the webpage (e.g. African Americans, Latinos, People of Faith, Rural Americans and Seniors)¹⁴ in order to get tailored information about the candidate's political program.

An oft-cited example of successful online campaign was Howard Dean's presidential campaign in 2004 (Owen & Davis, 2008), which made innovative use of the Internet's interactive tools for the first time (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005; Trippi, 2008). Ever since, Dean's online strategy has been emulated by other candidates. Some examples include Ségolène Royal successful primary campaign for the French presidential elections in 2007 (Maarek, 2011, p.26) and, as we will see in chapter four, the campaign of Movimento 5 Stelle in the 2013 Italian elections. Even though the pioneering examples of Internet usage in political campaigning usually come from the U.S., politicians in other countries also take this platform very seriously (Gibson et al., 2003).

The success of Dean's campaign resulted from the, already mentioned, pure-interactive communication and institutional-interactive communication features of the Internet. The interactive uniqueness of the Internet made Dean's campaign the first true example of a bottom-up and open-source campaign. A strongly decentralized campaign structure where hundreds of thousands of Internet users were actively participating and contributing to the campaign by voicing their criticism and posting comments, which even improved the candidate's campaign discourse (Chadwick, 2006, p. 144).

An aspect that apparently also contributed to the success of this campaign was what Maarek (2011, p.45) identifies as a central aspect of electoral campaigning strategy: *the coherence of the campaign*. Dean's bid represented an outsider/populist movement that

¹⁴ See Pew Research Center's report "How the Presidential Candidates Use the Web and social media" available on (<http://www.journalism.org/2012/08/15/how-presidential-candidates-use-web-and-social-media>).

resonated well with the inclusive and deliberative characteristics of the Internet. A movement that, in the case of Dean's campaign, aimed to reintegrate in the political process all those individuals previously excluded from it because they could not afford 2,000 US dollar campaign donations in a system where money is ultimately all that matters. Trippi (2008, p. 102) argues, "the Internet is tailor-made for a populist, insurgent movement". Dean's campaign resonated with a community that lost their faith in the political institutions to solve their problems and that distrusts the mainstream media to express unbiased opinions.

In the end, even though Howard Dean did not win the 2004 primary elections, his campaign revealed the potential of the Internet for political communication. The campaign was extremely successful in using the Internet to mobilize supporters, improve the candidate's discourse, collect funds, stimulate the discussion of political issues among citizens and, more important for this dissertation, communicate directly to a large number of citizens without relying on the press and television. Encouraged by Dean's campaign or simply by the increasing popularity of the Internet, it is unquestionable that since then politicians started to make more and better use of Internet in their campaigns (Klotz, 2004).

Concerning the use of the Internet as a political communication tool, the majority of studies analyzing online political campaigns focus on the interactive features presented on the candidates' websites. This is understandable since the fact of being a multi-directional communicational channel is perhaps the most innovative and unique characteristic of the Internet. Most of them find somehow disappointing that most candidates and parties use websites only as a platform to provide information and do not use Internet's interactive features (Treichsel et al., 2003; Semetko & Krasnoboka, 2003; Ward et al. 2008b). Even though there are good examples of innovative and interactive online campaigns, some of which are mentioned in this section, those examples are the exception rather than the rule. The majority of online campaigns offer few opportunities for citizens' questions or input. When they provide such opportunities, it is often under semi-private and strictly controlled environments that do not encourage broad participation and discussions. Two aspects might explain the lack of multi-directional communication between politicians and citizens in the cyberspace. One consideration is the monetary and time costs of efficiently moderating such discussions or actively engaging with citizens. The second factor is that, unlike highly controlled and staged offline events, unmonitored online interactivity incurs high levels of uncertainty that can potentially damage the parties' and candidates' campaigns. From fake news to concerted attacks and troll factories, interactivity in the cyberspace can pose a serious

challenge to electoral campaigns and a potential threat to democracy (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

Overall, the majority of political parties and candidates do not yet offer many Internet-based opportunities for citizens to interact with their campaigns. However, the institutional communication made on the Internet can have, as we have been discussing in this chapter, an important role in the modern political campaigns. In fact, one important, but often overlooked, advantage of the Internet over the traditional media is that candidates and "parties are able to control the content and 'dosage'" of information that they convey to the electorate (Römmele, 2003, p.9). The following section addresses this aspect of political communication on the Internet.

2.5 – Social media and the Institutional Communication on the Web 2.0.

Besides the interactivity that the Internet allows, it is essential to also pay attention to the unilateral top-down communication made by parties and candidates on the Internet during electoral campaigns because, as Boas (2008, p.21) puts it, a crucial advantage of the Internet is the possibility for political actors "to circumvent the mass media, and to influence its coverage". This aspect becomes crucial since, as demonstrated already, the literature has been accusing the press and television of distorting political campaigns by creating less informative and strategy/conflict driven news stories. The Internet allows the candidates to communicate directly to citizens on a platform not ruled by commercial principles and to convey to the audience, free from any distortions, what they really want to be known and discussed.

However, on this point, the use of either online webpages or electronic mail, for political campaigning, has significant disadvantages in comparison to traditional media. The main shortcoming of webpages is that candidates cannot control the distribution of information. In this sense, the Internet is a "pull" medium (Maarek, 2011), meaning that citizens will only check candidates' websites if, and when, they want to. As a result, it will be mostly citizens that already support a party or candidate, or individuals more generally interested in politics to visit those webpages. Since the recipients of their messages are very limited, websites are mainly used to mobilize supporters and fundraising rather than inform, or even persuade, citizens. For this reason, like party manifestos, the content of websites is usually directed to and destined for journalists, who seek "hot" content. As Schweitzer (2012) found, in the case of the German parties, the campaign websites follow the media logic principles, being similar to the campaign content offered by other media.

Different from webpages, political actors can by employing electronic mail control the recipients of their messages. In theory, political candidates and parties can, through email, reach a vast number of diverse individuals. However, as discussed already, since public mailing lists are not common and unsolicited electronic correspondence can cause negative responses and serious backlash, political actors usually refrain from sending information to citizens who did not willingly give them their electronic addresses (Krueger, 2006). As a result, email is mostly used by the parties and candidates, similarly to the websites, to mobilize and inform their supporters.

However, this picture has changed to a great extent following the arrival of Web 2.0 and the popularity of the Social Networking Sites (SNS), or social media¹⁵. Even though SNS have been around since 1997, it was only after 2003 that their number, all over the Internet, drastically increased (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p.212). Nowadays, new segments of population like bloggers and social media users are increasingly changing the forms of political participation and reinventing democracy. As Zúñiga et al. (2010, p.46) point out, evidence suggests the “emergence of a hybrid participation that combines the virtual and real world realms of political engagement and actions”, and that “online participation serve not as an endpoint of participation, but fosters greater participation”. For this reason, there is a growing body of academic research, which places a particular emphasis on the role and impact of social media across a vast range of contexts and fields such as business (Culnan et al., 2010), health sector (Thackeray, 2012), government (Mergel, 2013), crisis management (Jin et al. 2014), and also political communication and electoral campaigns (Chen & Smith, 2010; Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Lawless, 2011). Most of these studies envision the SNS as revolutionary platforms that can, although not without some risk (Khan et al. 2014), re-shape and greatly improve the communication between organizations and citizens.

The literature on the use of social media by public or private organizations identifies two main functions, or advantages, of the adoption and use of these online applications. One is the opportunity to regularly inform stakeholders in a fast and inexpensive way. Social media can be used to increase openness and transparency of organizations (Bertot et al., 2010). In fact, increase transparency seems to be the main function of social media employed by local governments (Bonsón et al., 2012). The second function is to facilitate dialogic

¹⁵ Even though we will use, in this work, the two terms, Social Networking Sites and social media interchangeably, these two terms can have slightly different meanings. Social media is a more encompassing term that can include, besides the referred Social Networking Sites, other online applications such as virtual game/social worlds. Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) offer a discussion on the topic and a typology of social media. Nevertheless, the two terms are closely related to each other, and often used interchangeably in the literature (Mergel, 2012, p.12), being the SNS nowadays the most common and popular type of social media.

communication and therefore the development of relationships between organizations and stakeholders (Kent & Taylor, 1998). Organizations and government officials can use social media to learn more about their audiences and use the input and opinions of interested citizens to improve services and communication with them (Linders, 2012; Kavanaugh et al., 2012). Ultimately, social media can be used to promote and facilitate citizens' participation and collaboration in decision-making processes (Chun et al., 2010; Lee & Kwak, 2012).

Simply put, social media, or Social Networking Sites, are online platforms that, in a free, simple and faster manner, allow its users to share content (e.g. text, video or images) and communicate within a community of individuals in the same network or even beyond it, since nowadays the social media messages of political candidates are also becoming a regular source for newspaper articles (Broersma & Graham, 2012). Indeed, not only is some the social media content considered newsworthy, but also the activity of politicians on social media seems to positively influence the likelihood of them being mentioned by journalists (Hong & Nadler, 2012, p.459).

Social media can either be public when its content is available to everyone on the Internet (e.g. Twitter), or semi-private (e.g. Facebook) when only subscribers of those applications are able to see the content originated in them. Different from websites and online forums, which are structured around interests and topics, the SNS are organized around people and "structured as personal (or 'egocentric') networks, with the individual at the center of their own community" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p.219). The SNS are therefore generic online spaces and uncharted territory that can be explored and exploited by individuals and groups with completely different interests and goals. Furthermore, with the customization being restricted and standardized, social media are leveling the online playing field since, different from websites, the attractiveness of online presences (e.g. sophistication or user-friendliness) is not determined by the money invested in them. As a result, the success and visibility of individuals, groups and organizations on the SNS mostly depends on their efforts and competence rather than their resources and size.

What makes these platforms extremely valuable tools for institutional and political communication, however, is their huge, and growing, popularity among Internet users. Nowadays, in countries like the U.S., more than half of the Internet users has at least one social media account, with Facebook being by far the most popular (Duggan & Brenner, 2013, p. 2). In 2017, Facebook had more than two billion monthly active users worldwide¹⁶, a

¹⁶ Facebook Statistics. < <https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/>>.

figure that has doubled in only five years (Ljepava et al., 2013, p.1602). Twitter, another popular social media, had in 2017 more than 328 million monthly active users¹⁷. The explosion in the growth and use of these platforms in recent years made these applications "untapped gold mines" for different groups and organizations to communicate (White, 2011, p.32). Social media offer political actors an opportunity to bypass mainstream media and communicate directly to a larger audience, which can be especially attractive for challengers and less experienced candidates (Skovsgaard & Van Dalen, 2013). Understandably, political actors and parties do not seem indifferent to the growing popularity and potential of these platforms.

It is clear that there is a growing interest of political actors worldwide in the use of social media for political communication and electoral campaigns (see e.g. Grant et al., 2010; Graham et al. 2016). A very good illustration is the Italian 2013 general election, which has been coined as the first "Twitter Italian general election" (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2013, p.2). Not only did the Italian political actors make extensive use of Twitter during the election but also the mainstream media paid close attention to the content being generated on this platform (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2013, p.2), even though the weekly Internet use and social media use was still limited in the country (Rossi & Orefice, p.442). The popularity of social media among Italian politicians can however also be partly understood as an example of "communication conformism", with the politicians adopting these technologies partly because the others have done so too (Morini, 2015, p.67). Also among members of the American senate and congress, the use of social media to communicate is common and growing in popularity, even though the content may not substantially differ from the messages they communicate on other platforms (Lawless, 2011). Overall, either because political actors understand the potential of social media, or they are simply catching a hype train, it is indisputable that the SNS became a central aspect in political communication. Nowadays it is difficult to find candidates or parties that do not communicate through these platforms.

Regarding the increasingly more common use of social media for campaigning, we can perhaps talk of the Obama effect. The success of Obama's campaign in 2008 has been partially attributed to its effective, and at the time innovative, adoption of social media, which might have globally increased the interest of other political actors in these platforms (Ross et al., 2015). Social media allowed Obama's campaign to motivate and mobilize millions of volunteers and contributors during the presidential campaign and to simultaneously enhance

¹⁷ Twitter - Statistics & Facts. < <https://www.statista.com/topics/737/twitter/>>.

the political participation of American citizens (Cogburn & Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011). Even though Obama's campaign did not use Twitter in 2008 (the campaign only sent one tweet because, according to his campaign manager Jim Messina, they thought at the time that Twitter was a “stupid technology”¹⁸), this perception clearly changed in 2012, with the same candidate's account posting on average 30 tweets per day (Rosentiel & Mitchell, 2012).

Political actors can use social media as both multi-directional and unidirectional communicational channels, even though the former is still relatively uncommon (Graham et al., 2013a; 2013b). Not only are today's political actors extensively using social media but they also seem to use different SNS for different types of communication. According to Morini (2015), in the case of Italy, Facebook is used by politicians mainly as a recreational tool while Twitter is more often used as a multi-directional communication channel to discuss substantive political issues. In a similar way, Enli & Skogerbø (2013) also found that unlike Facebook, which is mainly used by Norwegian politicians for marketing purposes, Twitter is more often used to discuss and interact with the electorate. Overall, social media can be used by the political actors for different reasons or to convey different types of information, with Twitter being seemingly more suitable for dialogic purposes. However, as we will see in the four chapters analyzing the elections, there are also examples of political parties and candidates that convey the exact same information on both Twitter and Facebook during electoral campaigns. In those cases, the different SNS are only used for the purpose of increasing the messages' reach.

A great advantage of the SNS, and perhaps the most important one, is that it gives the political actors the possibility, bypassing mainstream media, to reach and inform an audience that is not only composed of their supporters and the most politically engaged individuals. In the SNS, the followers of the parties and candidates can work as mediators and gatekeepers and share the content generated on these platforms with other users in their networks. Ultimately, the communication on social media can work in a two-step flow model (see Katz, 1957), drastically increasing the number of recipients of the information. This is particularly important in the context of electoral campaigns since, as Johnson & Krueger (2012, p.239) put it, unsolicited political messages "from friends to friends may very well receive more favorable treatment than those same messages sent directly from the political organizations". With the SNS, the Internet becomes a “push” medium, where the information can arrive to the recipient without any effort, or interest, on his part (Maarek, 2011, p. 158). Furthermore, these

¹⁸ A Conversation With Jim Messina (December 6, 2012). La Pietra Dialogues. New York University in Florence.

online platforms are nowadays considered as important sources for political information, particularly for younger generations, even though the traditional media are still perceived as more serious and trustworthy (Towner & Munoz, 2016). In addition to this, studies have shown a positive correlation between consuming campaign information on the Internet and political engagement and the sense of self-efficacy (Kushin & Yamamoto, 2010).

There are several studies examining the use of SNS for electoral campaigns, particularly in the U.S. context (e.g. Williams & Gulati, 2009; Rainie & Smith, 2012; Rosentiel & Mitchell, 2012). These studies are usually more concerned about which candidates use SNS and the frequency of SNS use. There is, however, one study that analyzes how different communication channels might affect the amount of negativity in political campaigns, comparing the TV ads and YouTube videos during the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign (Crigler et al., 2012). The authors hypothesize that that, since YouTube viewers will be mainly supporters of the candidates, the content of the campaign videos will be less negative. A hypothesis that was indeed confirmed for at least one of the candidates. This result also suggests that a communication channel, which has a broad audience and is independent of a commercial logic, can in fact become a tool that allows politicians to produce less negative (with less attacks directed towards the opponents) political campaigns. Following this logic, the SNS might produce more informative campaigns if candidates are in fact interested in doing so.

During the electoral campaigns, the candidates and parties have at their disposal different communication channels that can be more or less adequate for the type of campaign and electorate these actors want to make and reach (Kriesi et al., 2009; Maarek, 2011). The Internet and the SNS, evidently, are not the only way possible for a candidate to bypass the television news programs and press and broadly convey their messages directly to citizens. Another method, already mentioned, is the use of political advertisement in television and newspapers. As noted already, the amount of negativity in political ads, especially in countries like the U.S and Canada, suggests that the disregard of substantive political issues or an emphasis on conflict and controversial aspects in the news coverage of political campaigns may not be the exclusive responsibility of traditional media but the candidates might also be held liable. However, the commercial logic of the traditional media appears to influence, although indirectly, the content of the political ads.

While some countries, like Germany or Portugal, have electoral legislation that forces television to give political actors some free air-time for their campaign, the political advertisement is usually extremely costly for the candidates and parties. It is not unusual that,

in some cases, the cost of political advertising, and the cost of fundraising for those ads, exceed 80% of the candidates' campaign budget (see Ansolabehere et al., 1993, p. 90). For this reason, in order to increase the efficiency of the ads and generate a "ripple effect", the candidates publish ads that are so negative and controversial, in order to make them appear not only in the paid slots but also in the news (see Ansolabehere et al., 1993, p. 89). The amount of information is reduced by the limited number of ads. By contrast, on the SNS, the communication is practically free. The costs are not, however, the only differences between the two platforms. We can identify, at least, four other differences that might influence the strategies of parties and shape their campaign messages.

The first difference is the audience. As we saw before, while in the TV and press the audience is more cynical of politics and less politically engaged, on the SNS the audience is composed, at least in a first phase when the information is not shared by other users, mostly of party supporters and politically engaged citizens. For this reason, we can expect the ads to be more negative in order to resonate better with the audience and have a stronger effect. The second is that in the paid ads, contrary to the SNS, both candidates can campaign on the same channels and newspapers. The presence of the opponent in the same communication platform might lead to more conflict, with the candidates using the opportunity to attack and counterattack their adversary. The third difference is that social media campaigns, compared to ads, face more scrutiny. While the role of scrutinizing TV ads is usually left to the journalists, which can take some time to be made public, and will probably not reach everyone that saw the ad, the information published on the SNS is immediately scrutinized by thousands of users, which gives parties and candidates an extra incentive to be more accurate, and maybe less negative, in their campaign messages.

Finally, the campaign opportunities offered by these two platforms (essentially due to the audience and the cost disparities) are also different. While the paid ads are mostly used to persuade the electorate (with positive or negative messages), the SNS also allow the candidates to make use of the platform to, for example, mobilize supporters to vote, to collect funds, and recruit volunteers for the offline campaign. The unique characteristics of the SNS, being relatively free (of both costs and media distortions), easily updated, and with a potentially broad and diversified audience, make this platform an excellent instrument (although not without some shortcomings) to access which campaign aspects (e.g. substantive political issues, strategy, conflict) are privileged by the political actors.

In the end, at the communication level, the most crucial difference between traditional media and social media, in terms of political communication, is that the latter gives political

actors "more control over the content of their message as well as over its pace and time of distribution"(Graham et al., 2013a, p.708). For this reason, analyzing and comparing the campaign made by the parties and candidates on the SNS with the traditional media news coverage of the same campaigns, which is the objective of this dissertation, can help us understand which factor—media logic or parties' and candidates' strategies—is contributing more to the supposed lack of substantive political information in the news coverage of political elections.

Chapter Three – Research Question/Hypotheses and Methodology

3.1 – Research Question and Hypotheses.

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is unclear which trend in political communication—the *media logic* of traditional media when reporting political campaigns or the professionalization and modernization of those campaigns by the political parties and candidates—is playing the most significant role in the absence of substantive political issues in the traditional media coverage of political events. As discussed, social media has had a profound impact on political communication and has shifted the power from journalists to politicians. As Graham et al. (2013a, p.708-9) put it, social media like Twitter gave political candidates "the opportunity to communicate directly, continuously and unrestrictedly with the audience and are not dependent on either processes of selection, framing and interpretation by journalists or party funding and activities". For this reason, comparing the parties' and candidates' campaign on the SNS with the journalists' news coverage of the same campaigns, which is the aim of this research, will help us understand how responsible the media logic of mainstream news media is for the lack of substantive political issues in the newspapers' sections dedicated to the electoral campaigns.

However, this approach raises two concerns. The first concern is that campaigns on social media could differ considerably from the "real" campaign of parties and candidates. The idea is that the uniqueness of the Internet will render unique the online campaigns of political candidates and parties. In other words, political actors might choose to conduct different campaigns, one for traditional media and a different one for the Internet. This possibility was very plausible, as we saw, in the Internet's early days, when this medium had a small number of users with homogeneous characteristics, and when the parties' and candidates' audience consisted mainly of their own supporters since the Internet was a *pull medium*. This situation affected and shaped online political communication, with the Internet being mainly used for mobilization purposes. Additionally, a web presence could be perceived more as a mark of the parties' or candidates' modernism and originality than an alternative and efficient communication tool for campaigning. A good example of this was the Republican candidate Bob Dole, who challenged the incumbent president Bill Clinton in the 1996 presidential election, announcing his webpage address at the end of the first presidential debate, when a comparably small number of people knew or regularly used the Internet at the

time. This was perceived more as a strategy to look “not too old to be president” (Davis, 1999, p.85), a strategy that, however, did not turn out so well since the candidate failed to communicate correctly his own online address (Klotz, 2004, p.68).

However this picture, as we saw, increasingly started to change in early 2000s. With the Web 2.0 and social media, the Internet became a *push medium* which vastly increased the political parties’ and candidates’ online audience. In other words, the Internet became a suitable communication channel not only for mobilization but also for political persuasion. As Parmelee & Bichard (2011, p.137) found, a considerable proportion of Twitter users (around 41%) also follow the political actors with whom they often disagree. Overall, we expect that social media campaigns do not differ considerably from traditional media campaigns for three main reasons. The first reason is that in terms of volume and characteristics, Internet users and traditional media consumers do not differ so radically nowadays. The second is that the source of the content for the news coverage and social media campaigns is primarily the same, which is the offline staged campaign events. While in traditional channels those events are framed by journalists, in cyberspace the same events are framed by the politicians themselves. The third, and final, reason is that the uncertainty of campaigning on social media, in terms of whom will end up receiving the politicians’ messages, reduces the incentives for politicians to conduct alternative and unique campaigns on those applications. Different from paid advertisement on traditional media, communicating on social media is like casting a message in a bottle to sea (Castells, 2009, p. 66).

Indeed, some studies also suggest that to a great extent online campaigns reflect the offline campaign made by the political candidates (Xenos & Foot, 2005). In the end, as Small et al. (2008) point out, the online campaign gives citizens the opportunity to follow and experience the offline campaign. The fact that online campaigns seem to replicate the offline campaigns might also be related to the importance of coherence in electoral campaigning strategies (Maarek, 2011, p.45), and the fact that campaign messages become more effective when repeated and reinforced in different communication channels (Mancini & Swanson, 1996, p.13).

In sum, our expectation is that political actors communicate on the Internet, to a great extent, the same messages and issues that they convey (or would like to) through more conventional campaign channels. Evidence from the literature, related to both nature of social media and politicians’ and candidates’ campaign strategies, point in this direction. The expectation is that, due to the audience and the cost involved in social media campaigning, analyzing the messages in those applications is the best non-intrusive way of identifying the

aspects that candidates and parties truly want to convey and discuss. However, if some political actors actually conduct alternative campaigns for traditional media, we can nevertheless still speak of a journalistic distortion of the campaigns. In this case, similar to the two types of censorship, the distortion is not external and conducted deliberately by journalists, but it is internal and indirectly imposed on politicians by the agenda and logic of mainstream media.

The second one is that, on the SNS, parties might not be completely free from the media logic. They can post content expecting that it will attract news coverage, as they occasionally do in the television ads¹⁹. This is already a reality, as pointed out already, since some of today's news media stories come from information posted on the SNS. Naturally, it is expected that the success of the SNS will attract the journalists in addition to the political actors. However, the fact that additional costs for posting more information on the SNS are so low allows parties and candidates to, theoretically, address everything they want to be made known and discussed in their campaigns.

In sum, the SNS is not a perfect instrument to examine which aspects were prioritized by the candidates in their "real" electoral campaign. Nevertheless, considering this media's unique characteristics (particularly the capacity to reach a large and heterogeneous audience and their low cost), the SNS are perhaps the best instrument we have. Besides, the SNS also have the advantage of embodying the professionalization and modernization of electoral campaigns. A systematic analysis of the campaigns made on the SNS will offer us valuable information regarding the current trend of political communication in established democracies.

The research question of this dissertation is: How informative are the unmediated electoral campaigns made on the SNS, in comparison to their traditional news coverage? Or, to frame it differently, to what extent is the media logic and agenda of traditional mass media hindering the electoral competitors from producing more informative and less conflict-driven campaigns? The objective of the dissertation is to compare the electoral campaigns made by the political parties and candidates on the SNS with the traditional news media coverage of those campaigns.

In order to answer this question, we developed two main sets of competing hypotheses; a) *uninformative news* – if the highly controversial and issue-lacking news coverage of electoral campaigns are the result of the journalistic and editorial norms and

¹⁹ The so-called "ripple effect". See e.g. Ansolabehere et al. (1993, p. 89).

commercial principles that nowadays govern traditional media; and b) *hollow campaigns* – if the main campaign actors prefer to avoid discussing substantive political issues in their campaigns.

For the first set of hypotheses, the *uninformative news*, we can expect that if the media logic or journalistic conventions are responsible for making the news coverage of electoral campaigns less informative then:

H1a – The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will place less emphasis on issues/policies than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.

H1b– The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will place more emphasis on strategy and horse-race aspects than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.

H1c – The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will show more conflict between political actors than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.

H1d – The Social Network Sites will offer a greater diversity of issues.

The first three hypotheses (H1a; H1b; H1c) are linked to the frames used in the campaign. They reflect the expectation that the commercial logic of traditional news media, or the journalistic principles and beliefs, will produce less informative campaigns – meaning that political events will be framed more in terms of strategy, horse-race and conflict rather than substantive political issues (Patterson, 1993; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) – in comparison to unmediated communication channels, such as social media.

The fourth hypothesis (H1d) is specifically connected to the nature of the issues that are presented in the campaigns. The frame analysis of the media coverage and party campaign on the SNS is insufficient to analyze how much the media are, in fact, neglecting the substantive policy issues raised by the parties in their campaigns. Bearing in mind the media logic, traditional news media during political campaigns might distort the political campaigns not only by neglecting the substantive political issues in their news coverage but also by following the audience's "issue-attention cycles". According to Downs (1972) the salience of domestic issues is unstable since public opinion rarely remains focused on or interested in one issue or problem for long periods of time. It is then expected that media, following the preferences of the public, focus their news coverage on "hot" issues and neglect other subjects

that arouse less interest in the public. Some of the reasons why certain issues lose their prominence in peoples' minds and on the media's agenda are the fact that they only affect or threaten a small section of the population (such as poverty or ethnic and cultural issues), or simply because a majority of the population, or elites, profits from keeping those issues and problems less visible (Downs, 1972, p.41). Moreover, more complex and technocratic issues (like procedural rules or the issues related to European Union) are sometimes neglected since they require more effort from the journalists to be reported (Statham, 2007) and are also more difficult for the audiences to understand.

Moreover, there is a constant need in the news media to provide novel information to the audience. In this sense, the political parties might focus and constantly repeat a limited number of issues in their campaigns that of course will not be repeatedly reported in the mainstream news programs and newspapers (except, of course, if journalists want to point out, precisely, the lack of variety in the discussion of political issues). For these reasons, it is also crucial to analyze the type of issues discussed by the political parties in their online campaigns, an arena where political actors can address (if they really want to do so) issues usually ignored and not so 'appealing' to the traditional media's own agenda.

For the second set, *hollow campaigns*, which unlike the previous campaign, we can expect the exact opposite. If political parties and candidates are not interested in producing more informative electoral campaigns then:

H2a – The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will place the same or more emphasis on issues/policies than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.

H2b– The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will place the same or less emphasis on strategy and horse-race aspects than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.

H2c – The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will show the same or less conflict between political actors than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.

H2d – The Social Network Sites will not offer a greater diversity of issues.

This second set of hypotheses challenges the responsibility of the mediators' interference and the media logic for the lack of substantive political issues in traditional media's coverage of electoral campaigns. Instead, it reflects the possibility that the

modernization and professionalization of the candidates' and parties' campaigns are responsible for this fact. The last hypothesis (H2d) will also help us understand to what extent the influence of media's own agenda is making political parties and candidates, in their offline campaigns, "develop only campaign themes that fit the media's agenda and therefore seeming more apt to be relayed by them" (Maarek, 2011, p.52). Table 1 presents an overview of these two main sets of competing hypotheses. As we saw in the previous chapter, there are some reasons why parties and candidates might prefer to avoid discussing substantive political issues and problems in their campaigns and focus instead on other aspects, such as strategy and conflict. Overall, these hypotheses will help us understand a little better the role of both journalists and political actors in the absence of substantive political issues in the news coverage made by the traditional media.

Table 1 – Overview of the two main sets of hypotheses (H1 – Uninformative News Vs. H2 – Hollow Campaigns)

	<i>Uninformative News</i>	<i>Hollow Campaigns</i>
Issue/policy Frame	More salient in the SNS campaign	More or equally salient in the press and television news coverage
Strategy/Horse-Race Frame	Less salient in the SNS campaign	Less or equally salient in the press and television news coverage
Conflict Frame	Less salient in the SNS campaign	Less or equally salient in the press and television news coverage
Variety of political issues	Greater in the SNS campaign	Equal or greater on the press and television news coverage

In addition to the *media frames* that were mentioned before, which constitute a core part of the analysis, there are other *generic news frames* that have also characterized the news coverage of political events, which will also be examined in this study. Contrary to the *issue-specific news frames* that are limited to the news coverage of specific events (for example the frames found by Shah et al. (2002) in the news coverage of the Clinton's scandal) the *generic news frames*, as the name suggests, are less specific and can be applied in the analysis of different events (de Vreese, 2003). The major advantage of these frames is allowing the comparison of these events (like the electoral campaigns) across different time periods and contexts. In order to better understand and compare the campaigns made by political actors on the SNS with the respective news coverage made by traditional media, four other *generic*

news frames that are common during electoral campaigns (besides Strategy/Horse-Race; Issues and the Conflict Frames) will be analyzed. These Frames are the Scandal Frame (Strömbäck, 2008), Personalization Frame (Berganza, 2009), the Media-Relations Frame (Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006) and the Human-Interest Frame (Boukes et al. 2015). Despite not being the main aspects in this study, the analysis of these four media frames will provide us with valuable and complementary information to better understand how the political campaigns are being depicted in different media channels.

Regarding the Scandal Frame, there is, as we saw, the perception that conventional media, specially the most commercial media, are keen to emphasize the most sordid and controversial aspects of politics in their news coverage in order to attract more viewers or readers. The scandals of politicians seem to be an important characteristic of the news media coverage of politics (Thompson, 2000). Here, political scandals are understood to be the “politicians’ improper actions or statements that offend established public belief about proper conduct” (Bhatti et al., 2013, p.409). Those scandals can be related to gaffes, immoral or illegal behavior of the politicians connected to the offices they hold or simply connected to their personal lives. In the conventional media, as Jones (1995, p.10) observed, a big share of the coverage “tends to concentrate more on personalities, and on purveying a diet of gossip and scandal”. This also goes in the same direction of what some authors, like Patterson (1993) and Lloyd (2004), claimed to be a widespread practice among journalists; to depict political actors as untrustworthy individuals who are unfit for the job. However, according to Entman (2013), the salience of political scandals might be more related to political actors’ strategies to gain political advantage rather than changes of news media values. For these reasons, it is relevant to see which side—the candidates and parties with their online campaigns, or the news media with their campaign coverage—is placing more emphasis on political scandals during the electoral campaigns. Even though one can argue that the acknowledgment of politicians’ unethical behavior is relevant for voters to make more informed choices and hold accountable their elected officials, disproportionate visibility of scandal in the different media might nevertheless reduce the citizens’ trust in their elected officials.

The second additional media frame analyzed is the Personalization Frame, an aspect that became more salient with the rise of television and its prominence in political campaigns. The idea is that broadcasting media are increasingly more interested in politicians’ personal lives (Stanyer, 2013), emphasizing their traits and values and neglecting more relevant aspects such as the candidates’ policy preferences. According to Graber (1976), the news media, specially the television, rely more on short stories that emphasize, in addition to the most

sensational aspects of electoral campaigns, the candidate's individual characteristics. While political parties are losing some of their historical significance, the personal qualities, traits and personal lives of the political candidates and party leaders are becoming central aspects in electoral campaigns. Political parties are, however, also responsible for the strong personalization in the news coverage of electoral campaigns. Not only have telegenic and camera-friendly become main attributes for choosing party leaders and main candidates (see Jones, 1995), but also parties build their campaigns around the main candidates and even adapt their campaign issues to match and highlight the candidate's main traits (Esmark & Ørsten, 2006; Berganza, 2009). These personalization strategies may, according to Berganza (2009), also contribute to the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame in the news coverage of elections and, consequently, the lack of political issues information. Besides the lower salience of substantive political issues in the campaigns, another consequence of the personalization of politics is that the voters' political evaluations will be more founded on the candidates' performances and personal characteristics instead of their political preferences (Price & Tewksbury, 1997), encouraging political choices based on individual traits and values (see Graber, 1976).

The third aspect considered is the Media Relations Frame and the presence of news pieces or Internet posts that address the relationship between news media and political actors. Some news pieces about electoral campaigns have been framed in terms of how political actors try to attract and influence the work of journalists, sometimes describing, for example, the politicians' attempts to avoid that journalists report incidents or messages that they perceive as bad or damaging for them (see Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006). This clash between politicians (seeking good visibility in mainstream media, while avoiding negative visibility) and journalists (trying to establish their independence from political actors) is crucial to better understand the importance and role of new communication channels in modern political campaigns. It is not surprising that candidates and parties that centered their campaigns on online platforms were also skeptical and critical of the news coverage of campaigns made by the mainstream media. The study of this frame is, therefore, important to understand the attitudes of candidates and parties towards traditional news media and to determine if these media have any relevance or role in the political actors' online campaigns. If politicians also share with some scholars, as we saw, suspicion towards journalists' role and influence in the campaigns, we can expect them to either disregard in their online posts the content generated by mainstream media (like Obama did to some extent in his campaign

website in 2012) or use their Internet platforms to challenge the traditional media and discuss, for example, how journalists distort or neglect their campaigns.

The fourth, and final, additional media frame examined is the Human-Interest Frame. This aspect concerns the articles and videos that illustrate a problem with examples of ordinary people, an aspect that has been increasingly used by journalists. The use of this media frame can also have a negative effect on the audience causing them to attribute responsibly to the governments for the problem discussed (Boukes et al. 2015). For this reason, we can expect this frame to be more frequently used by the opposition parties and candidates. However, it can also be used by the incumbents as a way to illustrate their achievements and reinforce their record in office. Overall, we do not have any major expectation regarding the use of this media frame, except that it is frequently used by journalists. For this reason, the analysis of this aspect will be mostly exploratory to see if indeed the Human-Interest Frame is a frequent aspect in the electoral campaigns and who uses it the most.

Overall, in addition to the salience of Issues, Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict, we can also expect, if traditional news media are in fact distorting the electoral campaigns, other differences between the campaigns made by the parties and candidates on social media and the mainstream media news coverage of those campaigns. We can therefore formulate three additional research hypotheses.

If commercial imperatives or journalistic norms are influencing the news coverage of political elections and distorting those campaigns then:

H3a - *The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will place more emphasis on political scandals than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.*

H3b - *The media coverage of the parties/candidates elections campaigns will place more emphasis on aspects related to the politicians' private lives than the campaign presented by these parties/candidates on the Social Network Sites.*

H3c - *The parties/candidates campaign on the Social Network Sites will emphasize more politician-journalist relationship aspects of the campaign than its media coverage.*

The main goal of this research is therefore to compare the salience of different generic media frames, which are common during electoral campaigns, in both the traditional media and social media. In other words, this study examines if journalists frame electoral campaigns differently from the political actors. However, if any of those actors, journalists or candidates

and parties, is indeed responsible for the lack of discussion of substantive political issues in journalistic articles about elections, we should observe some differences between a) different parties/candidates and b) different elections/countries, regarding the salience of media frames.

a) As we saw, it is possible that some strategies adopted by political parties and candidates in their electoral campaigns are to some extent responsible for the lack of political issues – and for the salience of strategy, horse-race and conflict – in the news coverage of political elections. The previous chapter presented and discussed several aspects that might explain why political actors deliberately conduct less informative campaigns. However, the majority of those aspects do not equally affect all parties and candidates. Instead, the literature suggests that mainstream and catch-all parties and candidates have "more to lose" from conveying their policy preferences during electoral campaigns. Since larger parties and candidates seem to have more incentives to avoid discussing substantive political issues during their campaigns, we can therefore formulate the following research hypothesis.

If mass marketing strategies adopted by political actors during electoral campaigns are responsible for the absence of issues in traditional news coverage of elections then:

H4 – The campaigns made by the larger parties/candidates – particularly the incumbents – will place less emphasis on issues/policies than the campaigns made by smaller parties/candidates.

b) As we saw, it is also possible that journalists, who follow their personal opinions, editorial norms or a *media logic*, distort the electoral campaigns conducted by the political actors by overemphasizing certain aspects of the campaign. For example, we can expect that in countries where conventional media are more strongly governed by commercial principles (media logic), the news articles about elections will more frequently be framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal, instead of Issues. Likewise, aspects such as the electoral system and political regime of a country might influence the electoral campaigns of parties and candidates. We could expect, for example, the electoral campaigns to be more frequently framed in terms of personalization in presidential elections, compared to the parliamentary ones. Therefore, besides the differences between political parties and candidates already discussed, the political campaigns that parties and candidates make on the Internet and the news media coverage of those campaigns might also reflect some media and political characteristics of those countries.

Ultimately, there are innumerable country-specific factors (such as the type of political or electoral systems, the official campaign period, restrictions in some of the campaign practices or simply the journalistic and media culture) that can potentially shape the electoral campaigns in different ways and the news coverage. For this reason, the last aspect taken into consideration in the examination of the news media coverage of political elections and the politicians' campaigns on the Internet will be the differences between countries, particularly the difference between U.S. and other countries. Regarding the news media coverage of elections, as we briefly pointed out in our review of the literature, most studies focus on the American case. Some of these works suggest an exceptionalism of American news media (see e.g. Graber, 1976; Patterson, 1993). The shift in the style of news coverage (becoming less informative to be more entertainment-oriented) was more prominent and first noted in the U.S. case.

Apparently the U.S. pioneered the shift in the logic of journalism, caused by the increased commercialism and competition between news providers (Lippmann, 1921) or perhaps the distrust of journalists towards politicians (Patterson, 1993), which made the coverage of politics less descriptive and progressively more interpretative – with journalists focusing less on “what” and more on “why” and where the “interpretation provides the theme, and the facts illustrate it” (Patterson, 1993, p.67). As we saw, this interpretative style of reporting events manifests itself, according to Brants & Praag (2006, p.31), “in less substantive and more negative and infotainment focused news, in media setting and framing (in terms of *horse-race*, strategy and conflict) the political agenda, and in journalists dominating the platform of political communication”. However, as we pointed out, this style of coverage apparently is not (or at least anymore) exclusively American. Other countries' news media with more or less similar media and political systems, especially in Europe (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), are also adopting this approach in their news coverage of political events.

Regarding politicians' campaigns, the trend appears to be similar. In line with the literature on the American example, the U.S. presidential and two-party system seems to favor personalization and political mass-marketing strategies. Strategies that, according to Newman (1999), are responsible for the absence of issues in campaigns and, as a consequence, also in the news coverage of those campaigns. As we saw before, in order to optimize the electoral outcomes, especially when elections are less competitive (Kahn and Kenney, 1999), parties and candidates might prefer to avoid discussing substantive political issues. Nevertheless, even though a large part of the most innovative campaigning methods come from the U.S.

(e.g. the test of new mass mediums, the reliance on innumerable opinion polls or the use of new technologies to target voters), other countries are adopting these new campaign techniques and strategies (Maarek, 2011). We can now speak of a proliferation of American campaign strategies and techniques in numerous democracies or a growing internationalization of campaign managers, spin doctors and electioneering practices in general (Plasser, 2000).

In sum, even though early studies highlighted a gap between the U.S. and other countries in the news media practices and campaign strategies, this gap has been apparently diminishing. For this reason, it is important to consider, in this study of parties' and candidates' campaigns and their mainstream media news coverage, not only the differences between types of mass mediums and political actors but also the potential differences between countries.

3.2 – Methodology.

In order to test the research hypotheses developed in the previous section, a substantial content analysis of the traditional media news coverage of political elections and the political campaigns made on the SNS was carried out in four first order national elections of four different countries (U.S.A. 2012, Italy 2013, Brazil 2014 and Portugal 2015). The news coverage of those elections was systematically, deductively and manually coded, during the last four weeks before election day²⁰, in the political section of two main national broadsheets, or similar types of newspapers. In the case of the newspapers, the unit of analysis was the newspaper article. Similarly, it was also coded and analyzed the campaign conducted by the main political parties or main candidates present in those elections, for the same period of time, in three of the main and most popular social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube). For social media, the unit of analysis were posts on Twitter and Facebook and videos in the case of YouTube. When Facebook or Twitter posts included additional information besides a text message (e.g. photo, video, link for an article), that information was treated and coded as part of the original post.

²⁰ This period was chosen since, according to Swanson & Mancini (1996, p. 259-60), it is the period usually established for the “official” campaign and due to time and resources limitations as well. Naturally there is some variance in the countries regarding this aspect with countries having much longer campaign periods with the U.S. being a very good example of this. Nevertheless, this is also the period were candidates and media usually intensify their campaigns and news coverage and allows us to collect a considerable amount of information.

Ideally, this study should analyze the news coverage made in different types of media. As we saw in the previous chapter, the content of the press can differ from the content of television, with the latter being more likely to deal extensively with strategy/horse-race and conflict aspects. However, the analysis of traditional media in this study is restricted to the press. Since this study analyzes elections in four different countries, this option was made mainly due to time and resource constraints. The content of print media, compared to broadcasting media, is easier and faster to collect and analyze. Nevertheless, the analysis of national quality newspapers provides a very good picture of how journalists frame political events in their respective countries. Not only because quality newspapers influence the content of television news programs (Golan, 2016), but also because differences between press and television, regarding their news coverage of political events, have been decreasing (Patterson, 1993; Druckman, 2005). In the end, since newspaper articles tend to be more informative than television news programs, this choice has also the advantage of being a more conservative approach to test the *uninformative news* hypothesis.

Regarding the methodology, the research method employed in this dissertation is content analysis, particularly the analyses of frames used by media and political actors. The content analysis is the systematic, objective and quantifiable analysis of a message content (Neuendorf, 2002, p.1). It is a method of coding information – being its text, image, audio or video (Graber, 2004) – in different groups or categories based in predetermined criteria (Milne & Alder, 1999). The content analysis has to be systematic in both the identification and interpretation of the content. In other words, the aspects included or excluded from the coding procedure were systematically selected to avoid a biased selection of cases that support a specific hypothesis. By doing so, the content analysis allows us to test our hypotheses, driven from the literature, and to identify theoretically relevant outcomes (Keyton, 2001).

The content analysis is also a method that allows and guarantees, according to its context, the replicability and validity of the inferences made (Krippendorff, 1980, p.21) by integrating, besides a methodic collection of the data, an analytic technique to measure the occurrence, in a particular source of information, of identifiable elements (see Keyton, 2001) that are commonly observed across similar events. Overall, being a research technique, the content analysis method requires the existence of specialized procedures of analyzing content that, like all scientific instruments, need to be replicable. The procedure should therefore guarantee that other researchers are able to obtain the same results when applying the same techniques to the same data (see Krippendorff, 1989). This method can be quantitative,

qualitative, or, as in most cases and also in this dissertation, a combination of both, in order to take advantage of both approaches (Graber, 2004).

The content analysis has, according to Krippendorff (1980), two important advantages compared to other methods. The first is not being intrusive. This means that, contrary to other instruments like interviews, surveys or experimental methods, there are no risk, by involving other people in the process, of having distortions and errors in the information collected. The other advantage is that it allows the systematic and quantifiable analysis of non-structured information, being sensitive to specific contexts but also allowing the comparison between them. Overall, this method allows us to identify, in a non-intrusive way, which topics or aspects were more frequently emphasized by both journalists and politicians during the four electoral campaigns analyzed in this dissertation.

Nevertheless, this method also has, according to the same author, two disadvantages or problems. The first issue, which is not particularly important, is time-consuming nature owing to the requirement of a big human effort in collecting and coding the information when the process is made by hand. For this reason, content compared can be slightly more prone to human errors compared to other research methods. The second issue is the need for strong intercoder reliability, particularly in studies where several coders are involved. This is a major concern, when the analysis of content has a major qualitative approach, which must be carefully addressed by any researcher. When the analysis is not properly prepared and conducted, different people can, using this method, draw different interpretations from the same information, thereby undermining both the reliability and validity of the results. Nevertheless, this problem can in part be overcome with coders' training and more detailed and well-thought codebooks. It can also be tested with several intercoder reliability measures and indexes that can be more or less adequate according to the characteristics of the data and the analysis (Lombard et al., 2004). Regarding this problem, all of the data in this study (with the exception of the two Portuguese newspapers) was coded by myself. The same codebook had been previously used by myself in a different study which showed very high levels of intercoder reliability for all of the items analyzed in this dissertation. The person responsible for coding the Portuguese newspapers had a training session before starting the coding process. Tests conducted with a sample of 30 newspaper articles revealed high levels of intercoder reliability, higher than 90%, for all of the aspects (media frames) included in the descriptive and explanatory analyses.

Being the method most broadly used in the study of political messages (Graber, 2005), the content analysis was the most appropriated tool to explore this thesis' research question

and test its research hypotheses. This method allows a systematic identification of pre-determined aspects (in this case media frames) not only in the news coverage of legislative elections but also in the parties' and candidates' campaign on the SNS. The central component of this study is a media framing analysis of the candidates' and parties' campaign on the SNS and the media news coverage of the same campaigns. The content analysis was done manually which is preferable, since the objective is not to count words, to analysis that resort to informatics software (Althaus et al., 2001). Since this study also analyzes content from social media, which offer information in diverse formats (e.g. text, video, audio), the use of automated text analysis tools not only was not recommendable, considering the relative complexity of the aspects we wanted to identify, but it was also almost impossible. The data collection was conducted manually, on a daily basis, during the period analyzed. This was done in order to minimize the risk of some social media content being deleted or no longer accessible in a later period of time.

Regarding the definition of media frames, this topic was already thoroughly discussed in the previous chapter. In this frame analysis we use the definition offered by de Vreese (2003, p.27) which identifies frames as “an emphasis in salience of some aspects of a topic”. This definition has the advantage of simplifying considerably the process of identification of media frames. In addition to this, by using this definition, the identification of media frames can be applied not only to the traditional news coverage of campaigns but also to the candidates' and parties' campaign on the social media.

The identification of media frames can be made through both an inductive or deductive approach (de Vreese, 2003). While in the first case the content analysis is made without an *a priori* categorization of frames that will only emerge during the analysis, the second one analyzes the occurrence of media frames previously identified and conceptualized. This study uses a deductive approach, which allows us to compare different contexts and, important for this study, different countries. This means that the frames analyzed in this study were previously identified and defined in a codebook combining both quantitative and qualitative elements. A considerable part, particularly the identification of the frames, in this codebook was adapted from a codebook previously used to analyze the salience of media frames in conventional media, in the context of the 2009 European Parliament Elections²¹. The use of this codebook, even though it was developed for a different context, has three advantages. The first advantage is that it offers a relatively simple way of measuring the

²¹ “The Mediatization and Framing of the 2009 EP Elections”, coordinated by Jasper Strömbäck

salience of all seven media-frames that are interesting to us. The second benefit is its capacity to be easily applied not only to different contexts, or countries, but also to different types of media. The third one is having already shown and proven the effectiveness of the codebook questions and the validity of its results. The changes made in the codebook were essentially dropping questions measuring aspects not relevant to this study (i.e. EU-specific media frames) and the inclusion of some questions specific to social media (see Appendix with the codebook's details).

As we discussed previously in this chapter we identified and defined seven generic media frames that were used to analyze the online campaign of candidates and parties, as well as the news coverage of those campaigns made by the journalists. These frames were: *Issues*; *Strategy/Horse-Race*; *Conflict*; *Scandal*; *Personalization*; *Media Relations* and *Human-interest*. Each one of these media frames was identified in the following way:

Issues Frame: For the Issues Frame, it was examined if the news articles or the information published on the SNS dealt extensively with substantive political issues; problems and solutions presented by the campaign actors; the politicians' position regarding policy aspects; proposals of legislation and real-world problems or situations with policy implications. In general, when those aspects were just briefly mentioned in the items analyzed (e.g. a couple of sentences in a lengthy text) that media frame was not considered to be present in the news stories or social media content. The salience of this aspect, during electoral campaigns, is crucial since it informs the public about the preferences and positions of political parties and candidates on certain political topics, therefore contributing to more informed voting decisions. The low salience of this frame suggests that the electoral campaigns, or its conventional news coverage, was not very informative for the electorate.

Strategy/Horse-Race Frame: This media frame was identified in the news articles or SNS posts dealing with the campaign strategies of the candidates and their chances of winning the election. More precisely, articles and posts dealing with winning or losing in politics; the presentation or discussion of opinion polls (e.g. vote intention, issue preference); how the electoral results might affect the different candidates and parties; the strategic motivations behind the candidates' decisions; the way candidates and parties conduct their campaigns or simple vote appeals of the candidates. In the case of social media, this media frame also included items focused on endorsement messages, opportunities to support and volunteer for the campaign, opportunities to donate money to the candidates/parties, and

opportunities to experience and follow the real campaign (e.g. streaming channels where Internet users could watch the different campaign events). As we saw, according to the literature, this media frame has been dominating, particularly in the case of the United States, the journalists' news coverage of political events.

Conflict Frame: The Conflict Frame refers to the SNS posts and news stories that deal with disagreements and attacks between political actors. As we saw in the previous chapter, the literature shows the salience of conflict in electoral campaigns, similar to what happens with the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, can increase the political cynicism of viewers and reduce their sense of political efficacy, which might ultimately discourage the electorate from participating in the election. Together with Issues and Strategy/Horse-Race, the salience of Conflict is one of the three main aspects analyzed in this dissertation. Besides analyzing the salience of this aspect, we also try to examine if those attacks were mainly aimed at the opponents' political issues or their personal traits and values. Even though both types of attacks contribute to more negative campaigns, attacks aimed at the opponents' issues can at least, when they are true, inform the electorate about important aspects of the campaign.

Scandal Frame: This aspect was identified in stories that deal with gaffes considered scandalous, with illegal or immoral behavior of politicians in the exercise of their political functions or professional life (e.g. questionable use of public funds) and illegal or immoral behavior of politicians in their personal life (e.g. cases of adultery or alcohol consumption). Even though it can attract the attention of the public, the salience of these aspects, by portraying the political actors as unethical and immoral individuals, can have a negative impact on democracy by reducing the electorate's trust in political institutions.

Personalization Frame: The personalization frame was found in stories that were focused on the personal and private lives of the main candidates or party leaders, dealing extensively with the politicians' personal traits, values and image. In the last decades, this type of aspect has become particularly salient in the conventional media (Stanyer, 2013). Even though the salience of this media frame might not be as "harmful" as conflict and scandals, it nevertheless distracts the audience from what really is important in political elections, which is the pledges and position of the candidates on different political issues.

Media-Relations Frame: The last media frame analyzed was found in the newspaper articles and social media posts that dealt with the relationship between journalists and politicians (e.g. how politicians try to influence or control the work of the journalists).

One important feature of the media frames is that they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. One item can have more than one media frame if it deals extensively with several of the aforementioned aspects. Even though it depends of the typology adopted to analyze the content, “in practice, few news reports” have only one generic media frame (Iyengar 1991, p.14). For this reason, it is important to take into consideration not only the presence of different media frames but also to identify which one of those aspects is the first one to appear in the items analyzed. By looking at the first aspect emphasized in the news articles and SNS posts, we can better understand which aspects were prioritized by the journalists and political actors during the electoral campaigns.

Besides analyzing which generic media frames were more frequently used by journalists and political actors, this study will also examine the nature, or type, of political issues discussed in the four elections analyzed. Using the categories of issues in the 2009 EUProfiler (Trechsel & Mair, 2011) as a reference, the universe of issues analyzed in this work is limited to 13 issue dimensions: Economy and Work; Finances and Taxes; Society, Religion, and Culture; Institutional Design; Health; National Security; Transport and Energy; Law and Order; Foreign Policy; Welfare and Family; Education; Environmental Protection; and Migration and Immigration. In addition, issues that did not clearly fit any of the aforementioned categories were coded as "other", or as “various”, when several issues belonging to two or more categories were equally discussed in the same article.

Regarding the case selection, the elections analyzed were chosen, besides some more practical reasons (the electoral calendar, since data was collected in the days it was published online by the parties and candidates, and language limitations), bearing in mind different political arrangements and media cultures that can potentially explain the salience of some aspects in the electoral campaigns. Even though the analyses made in this dissertation are not primarily explanatory, one of the main goals of this study is, nevertheless, to compare the U.S. with other countries sharing, or not, similar political systems. Ultimately, this study includes two countries with presidential systems (U.S. and Brazil) and two with parliamentary arrangements (Italy and Portugal). Furthermore, the analysis also encompasses countries with different media systems, the liberal model of U.S. and the polarized pluralist model of Italy and Portugal (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). A comparative study of these four countries allow us

to examine not only the possible exceptionalism of the American case but also to investigate to a certain extent the role of different media cultures and political systems in shaping the content of the social media campaigns and the conventional news coverage of first-order elections.

In total, 2,537 articles were coded from eight different broadsheet newspapers. In the case of social media a total of 13,932 unique items were manually collected and coded (9945 posts from Twitter, 2640 items from Facebook and 1347 videos from YouTube). The analysis of Twitter and Facebook included as well all the additional information (e.g. articles from the press, blog posts, videos) that those posts could also contain. Tables 2 to 5 show the data collected and analyzed in this dissertation from each one of the four elections.

Regarding the campaign on the SNS, since the main goal is to understand how political actors choose to frame their own campaigns, this study is only interested in the institutional communication made from politicians to citizens. Other types of communication, from citizens to politicians or between citizens, were not examined in this work. In the case of Twitter we only analyzed the original posts made by candidates or political parties. The retweets made by the parties or candidates were not included in the analysis (i.e. when a Twitter user simply shares messages of other user of that application). In addition to this, only the main social media account of each candidate, or party, was analyzed.

Concerning the selection of the parties or candidates, this study only analyses the main political actors of each election. These are the actors that received more attention by traditional media and includes the incumbent party and candidate and the main opponents in each election. This option was a tradeoff between a high number of cases, which allows more interesting comparisons, and the author's constraints in terms of time and resources. The selection criteria in the presidential races were candidates with reasonable chances of winning the election. In the case of Italy, the analysis covered in addition to the party of the incumbent prime minister, the parties leading the two main, center-right and center-left, coalitions, plus the most voted single party in the election. Finally, for Portugal, all four political forces with parliamentary seats were analyzed. This strategy, when it comes to ideology of the actors, resembles a *most different systems design*, particularly in the presidential elections analyzed. Nevertheless, they also share the characteristic of being important political actors in the respective elections. This is particularly relevant since these are also the campaigns more likely to be reported by the journalists.

For the U.S. case we included in the analysis the two main candidates in 2012 presidential election, the incumbent Barack Obama and the Republican candidate Mitt

Romney. These were the only two candidates with actual chances of winning the election. In total, we collected 1626 posts and videos (see Table 2). Obama's social media campaign was more active on Twitter and YouTube. On the other hand, it was Romney that posted more frequently on Facebook during the four-week period of analysis.

Table 2 - SNS content analyzed from the U.S. campaign (2012)

	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube	Total
Obama	974	79	288	1,341
Romney	114	122	49	285
Total	1,088	201	337	1,626

For the Italian case we collected the SNS data of the four main contenders – Partito Democratico (PD); Il Popolo della Libertà (PdL); Scelta Civica (Scelta) and the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S). In total, 5622 unique items from the social media accounts of those parties were collected and analyzed (see Table 3). The social media accounts of the political parties, instead of the accounts of the party leaders, were chosen for the analysis of the online campaign in the two countries with parliamentary systems (Italy and Portugal). This decision was made for two reasons. The first reason is that in those two countries, independently of the personalization levels of the campaigns, the voters, ultimately, cast their votes on political parties and not candidates. Secondly, all parties had an online presence in all of the three SNS considered, which was not the case for all of the leaders of the parties analyzed. In addition to this, the social media accounts of the parties analyzed were, almost without exception, more active than the accounts of their respective leaders. This aspect is important since it answers the potential problem of some parties centering their online campaigning efforts and resources on the party leader's account in order to, for example, take advantage of his charisma or popularity.

Table 3 - SNS content analyzed from the Italian campaign (2013)

	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube	Total
Partito Democratico	534	100	199	634
Il Popolo della Libertà	2,132	383	28	2,515
Scelta Cívica	1,214	200	43	1,414

Movimento 5 Stelle	494	565	7	1,059
Total	4,374	1,248	277	5,622

In the Italian case, the most active political party on Twitter (from the four parties analyzed) was the PdL, which made, in the four weeks before the election-day, a total of 2,132 posts in Twitter. M5S was the party most active on Facebook, publishing in total 565 messages. In the case of YouTube, it was the PD that published the highest number (199) of videos. Even though it also had an official presence on YouTube, the M5S barely used the account to publish campaign videos. Instead, the campaign focused essentially on the 24-hour online channel of Beppe Grillo, one of the party leaders.

For the Brazilian case, the SNS campaigns of the three candidates with reasonable chances of, at least, being present in an eventual runoff election were analyzed. These candidates were the incumbent president Dilma Rousseff, and the two main challengers, Marina Silva and Aécio Neves. In total, 2189 items from the social media were collected and analyzed for this election (see Table 4). The incumbent president, Dilma, was the candidate most active on Facebook (139), Aécio on YouTube (166) and Marina on Twitter (863).

Table 4 - SNS content analyzed from the Brazilian campaign (2014)

	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube	Total
Dilma Rousseff	100	139	80	319
Marina Silva	863	123	103	1,089
Aécio Neves	486	129	166	781
Total	1,449	391	341	2,189

For the Portuguese election, we analyzed the SNS campaign of four political parties (two of them were two-party coalitions). These political actors were: the coalition Portugal à Frente (PaF), Partido Socialista (PS), Bloco de Esquerda (BE) and Coligação Democrática Unitária (CDU). These were the only political forces with parliamentary seats in the 2015 Portuguese legislative election. In total, 4,226 social media items were collected and coded (see Table 5). The coalition made from the two incumbent parties, the PaF, was the most active actor on the Facebook, with a total of 346 posts in this online platform. The coalition PaF was also the party with highest number of YouTube videos (182). The other coalition, the

CDU, was the most active actor on Twitter, publishing a total of 1,004 messages in the last four weeks before election day.

Table 5 - SNS content analyzed from the Portuguese campaign (2015)

	Twitter	Facebook	YouTube	Total
Portugal à Frente	769	346	182	1,297
Partido Socialista	528	105	99	732
Bloco de Esquerda	733	206	81	1,020
Coligação Democrática Unitária	1,004	143	30	1,177
Total	3,034	800	392	4,226

Table 6 - List of Newspapers and number of articles analyzed from the four elections.

Country	Name of the Newspaper	Number of Stories	Totals
U.S.	<i>The New York Times</i>	232	460
	<i>The Washington Post</i>	228	
Italy	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	419	742
	<i>La Repubblica</i>	323	
Brazil	<i>O Globo</i>	491	836
	<i>Folha de S. Paulo</i>	345	
Portugal	<i>O Público</i>	210	499
	<i>Jornal de Notícias</i>	289	

With respect to the newspaper analyzed, a total of 8 national broadsheet, or similar, style newspapers were analyzed. These newspapers are listed in Table 6. In the case of U.S. a total of 460 news articles from the New York Times and the Washington Post were analyzed. In Italy the two newspapers analyzed were Corriere della Sera and La Repubblica. A total of 742 newspaper articles were analyzed from the two Italian newspapers. In the case of Brazil, the two newspapers chosen were Globo and Folha de S.Paulo. These two newspapers had, in total, 836 news pieces about the electoral campaigns. Finally, the two Portuguese newspapers analyzed were the Público and Jornal de Notícias, which had, the two combined, 499 news pieces the newspaper section of the election.

Chapter Four – News coverage and online campaigning in the 2012 U.S. Presidential election

4.1 – The news media coverage of the U.S. election.

This chapter analyzes the news media coverage and the online campaign of the 2012 United States presidential election. In order to test our two main and competing research hypotheses (*Uninformative Media* vs. *Hollow Campaigns*), this chapter examines the salience of a predefined set of generic media frames in both the traditional media and in the social media accounts of the two main candidates in the election (Obama and Romney). According to the literature, we expect that the news coverage of this election was mainly focused on aspects such as strategy, horse-race and conflict between the different political actors. What is unclear, however, is if the political actors also refrained from discussing substantive political issues when they had the chance of framing, online, their own electoral campaigns. As we saw, we have reasons to expect that by bypassing the “messenger”, and its *media logic*, the candidates might offer the electorate, more informative and less conflict/horse-race driven campaigns on the Social Networking Sites. However, some political considerations and mass marketing strategies might hinder the candidates from doing so. The chapter is therefore divided in three parts. The first part examines the news coverage of the election made in two broadsheet newspapers, the New York Times (NYT) and the Washington Post (WP). The second part examines the frames used by the two candidates on social media. The last section of the chapter makes a comparison between the press and the SNS in terms of the media frames used by journalists and political actors.

With respect to the outcome of the 2012 U.S. presidential elections, held on November 6, the final result was the re-election of the incumbent president, the Democratic candidate Barack Obama, with 51.1% of the popular vote and 332 electoral votes. Obama’s main challenger in this election, the Republican candidate Mitt Romney, received 47.2% of the popular vote that was translated in 206 of the electoral votes. Despite a significant difference in terms of electoral votes in the election results, the last month of the campaign saw a much contested election mainly as a consequence of the first debate between the two presidential candidates on October 3. This debate, which the media critics unanimously considered to

have been “won” by Romney²², reduced Obama’s lead in the opinion polls. As a result, both candidates got an extra incentive to intensify their campaign efforts in the last weeks before election day. On the one hand, the democratic campaign had to recover from the president’s unconvincing performance in the first debate, which increased his campaign team’s concerns of losing the re-election. On the other hand, the Republican campaign used this “victory” in the debate to build momentum that could convince the needed voters and turn the election in favor of its candidate.

The uncertainty in the outcome of this election, one month before the election, makes the analysis of the media coverage of the 2012 U.S. campaign particularly interesting since it highlights a paradox regarding the salience of substantive political issues in the traditional news coverage of elections. On the one hand, according to Kahn and Kenney (1999), the more disputed an election is, the more the political candidates will present and discuss substantive political issues in their campaigns. On the other hand, if the outcome of one election is less predictable, it also becomes far more attractive to the journalists to report more trivial aspects of the election such as the candidates’ position in the opinion polls and their strategies to gain advantage. In other words, the uncertainty in an election gives political candidates a reason to present and discuss political issues and simultaneously gives journalists an additional incentive to ‘neglect’ them and focus instead on the horse-race aspect of the election. In this sense, there is one additional reason to expect, as the *uninformative news hypothesis* stated, that the online campaign of the two presidential candidates ended up being more informative, in terms of the salience of the Issues Frame, than the journalists’ news coverage of the 2012 American presidential election.

As the previous chapters anticipated, the frame analysis of the traditional news coverage of the American presidential election reflected in fact the *media logic* pattern of reporting political events pointed out by different scholars. Similarly to what Patterson (1993) found, the most salient media frame the news coverage of the 2012 U.S. presidential election was the Horse-Race/Strategy Frame (Figure 1). The majority of articles dealt, in an extensive way, with strategy and horse-race aspects of the campaign. In both newspapers, the Strategy/Horse-Race was the dominant frame present in 77.6% of NYT articles and in 75.9% of the news pieces of WP. In addition to this, the second most salient aspect in the press coverage of the election was the Conflict Frame. In the case of the NYT more than half of the

²² Presidential Debate Aftermath: Mitt Romney Wins All-Important BS Contest, *RollingStone* (5/10/2012), <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/presidential-debate-aftermath-mitt-romney-wins-all-important-bs-contest-20121005>.

stories (52.2%) presented conflict or disagreement between actors. In the case of the WP, conflict between political actors was observed in 47.4% of the articles. Overall, practically half of the news articles of the two American newspapers analyzed included conflict, which is a relatively high figure that apparently did not mirror the two presidential candidates' campaigns. As a journalist noted in a piece about the final debate, “the relative civility [between the two candidates] left viewers restless and inclined to look elsewhere”²³.

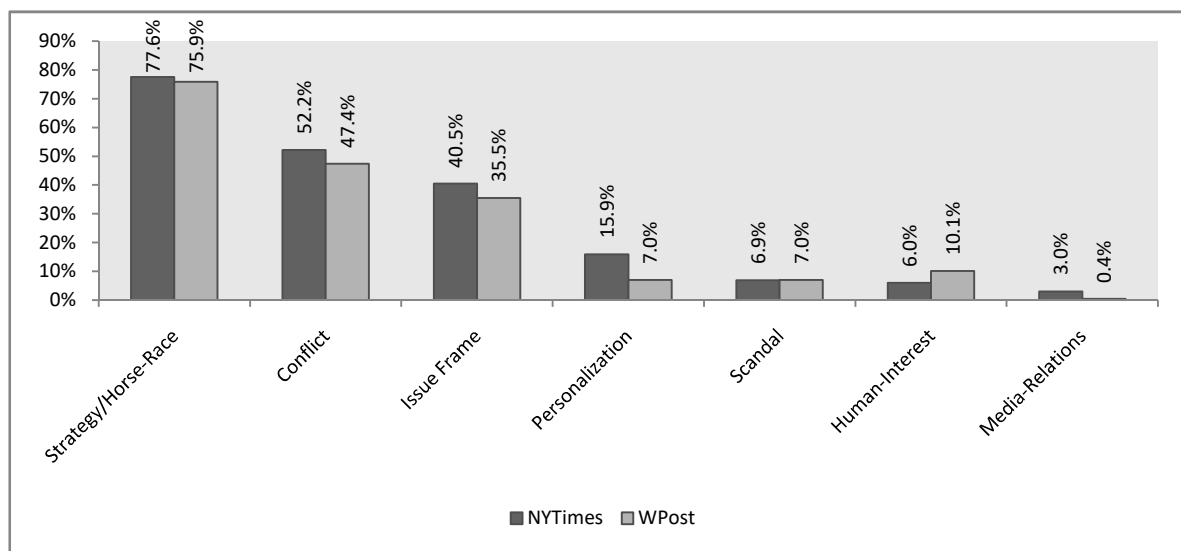


Figure 1 - Frames present in the news coverage of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election.

In both of the newspapers analyzed, the proportion of news articles dealing extensively with political issues was smaller than the percentage of articles including Strategy/Horse-Race Frame or Conflict Frame. Only 40.5% of the pieces in the NYT dealt with substantive political issues, with only 35.3 % of all news pieces showing the position of at least one candidate on those issues. Similarly, political issues were addressed extensively in only 35.5% of the WP articles, with only 33.3% of the news also including the position of the candidates on different issues. Overall, the results clearly show that the American journalists, in their news coverage of the presidential election, gave more salience to Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict aspects, particularly the former, to the detriment of discussing extensively the substantive political issues raised in the campaign.

With respect to the remaining five frames considered in this analysis, the fourth most salient aspect was the Personalization Frame. This aspect was included in 15.9% of the NYT pieces and on 7% of WP articles, suggesting that the American journalists, particularly from the NYT, often focused on the personal characteristics of the campaign actors and their

²³ Initial Reactions Suggest That Some Viewers Lost Interest The Third Time Around, *The New York Times* (23/10/12).

private lives in the newspaper articles. The remaining three frames (Scandal, Human-Interest and Media Relations) had all relatively low visibility in both newspapers. The news articles that included the scandal dealt mainly with gaffs of politicians or statements considered outrageous.

When we only consider the first/main frame used by the media to cover the election, the lack of interest of the journalists in reporting substantive political issues becomes even more evident (Figure 2). The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame is again the most salient aspect of the news coverage (58.6% in the NYT and 64.9% in WP) while the Issues Frame was the piece's first/main aspect in less than 15% of the articles in both of the newspapers analyzed. This suggests that, using the example of the NYT, even though 40.5% of the stories dealt extensively with political issues, only 14.7% of the news pieces had the discussion of substantive political issues as its primary objective. This result is important since, as we saw, the presence of conflict and game considerations in the stories distract the public from political issue aspects that the story might also contain. Consequently, the results strongly suggest that the majority of news articles in the press were not very informative to the American electorate, either because they did not discuss political issues or simply because they also emphasized other aspects that distracted the public from the more substantive information that those articles could also contain.

However, also Conflict loses its salience when we only look at the first/main frame used in the analysis. Conflict between the actors was the first/central aspect in 11.2% of NYT stories and only 9.2% in the WP. Similarly to what happened with the Issues Frame, conflict between actors was only on very few occasions the primary aspect presented in those two newspapers.

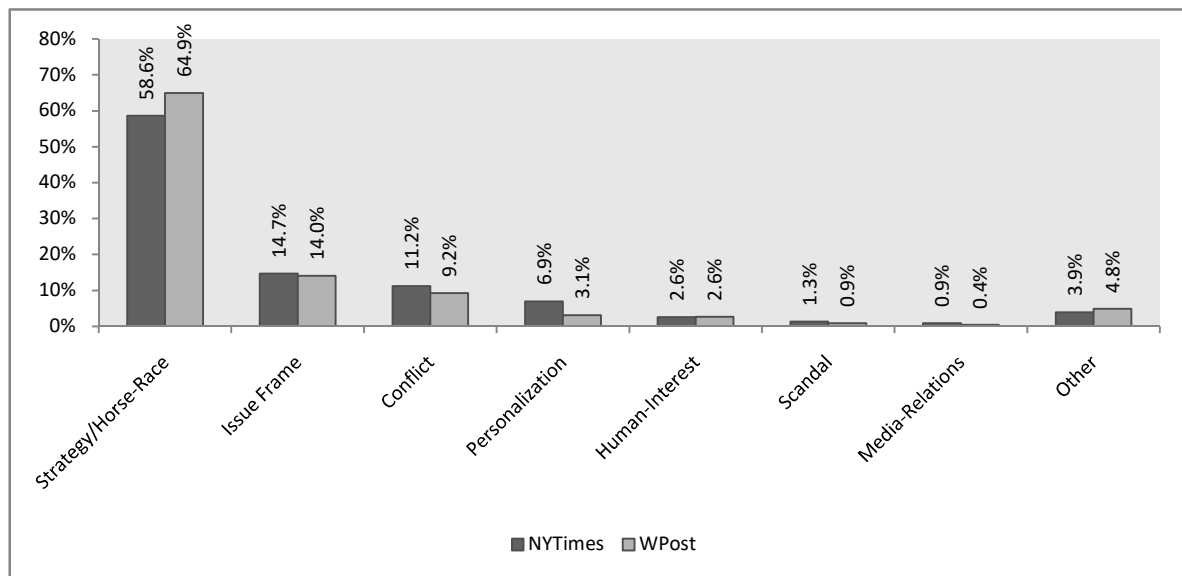


Figure 2 - The main/first frame present in the news coverage of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election.

In terms of the nature of the issues that were covered by the press, the results reflect some differences between the types of issues that both newspapers chose to emphasize. While all the aspects considered in our range of issue categories were covered at least once by the NYT, three categories (Law and Order; Institutional Design; and Welfare and Family) were never a central aspect in the WP news coverage of the election (Figure 3). Besides that, news emphasizing issues related to National Security or Migration and Immigration were considerably more visible in the NYT (12.8% and 4.3%) than in the WP (3.7% and 1.2%). On the other hand, some topics like Health, Environmental Protection and Foreign Policy were considerably more salient in the WP coverage. Despite these differences, Economy and Work was the most salient issue's category in both newspapers. Economy and Work aspects were central in 16% of the NYT stories that dealt extensively with issues and 14.8% in the case of the WP. In a similar way, also the categories Society, Religion and Culture and Transport and Energy received identical salience from both newspapers. These results reflect, especially in the case of the NYT, a campaign agenda that, besides economic aspects, often highlighted the candidates' positions regarding military budget, army size, the war in Iraq, gender equality and abortion laws. Finally, the high salience of the "various" category reflects the journalistic style of these two newspapers, which often offered long articles, that addressed multiple issues from different categories.

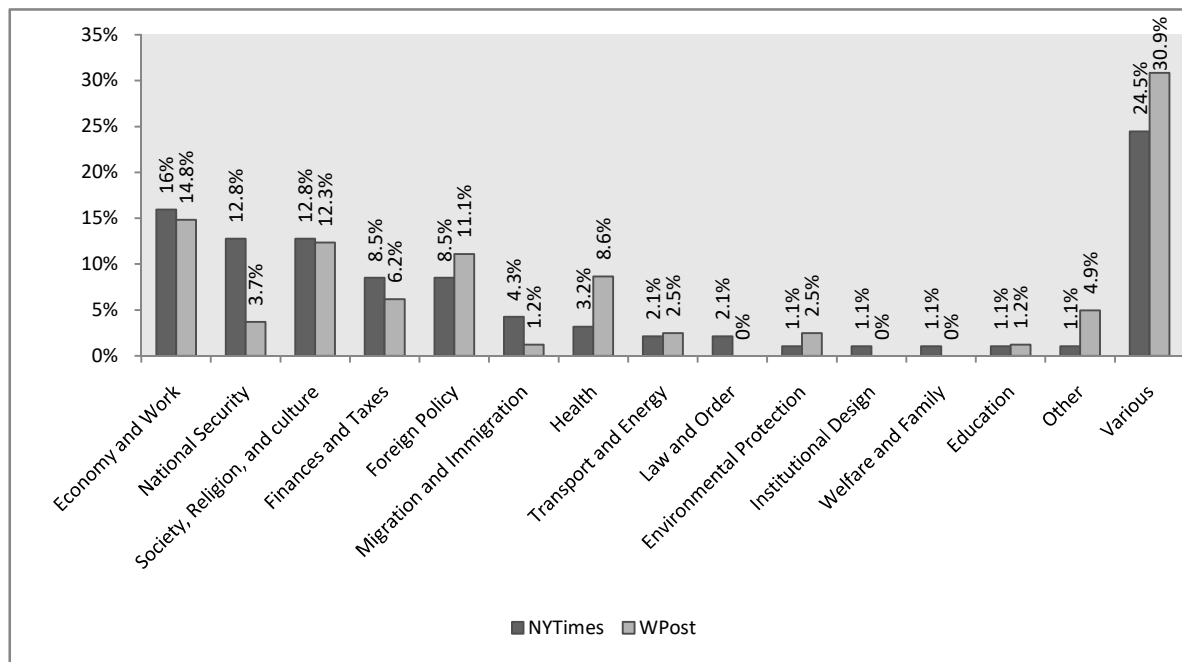


Figure 3 - Nature of the political issues present in the news coverage of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election.

As we saw, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the dominant aspect in the news coverage of the U.S. presidential election. This media frame can be sub-divided into different aspects, such as the horse-race aspect of the campaign, the candidates' strategies or simply stories related to electoral participation, the efforts of the candidates to mobilize people to vote, and voting in general. When we look at the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race sub-frames, the results show that candidates' strategies and the way they were conducting the campaigns was the most salient aspect in the news coverage. The Strategy sub-frame was used in 60.8% of the NYT news pieces, more than in the case of WP where, nevertheless, the strategy aspects (or the way candidates campaigned) was still addressed extensively in 52.2% of the stories (Figure 4). This means that one out of two news pieces about the election in both newspapers focused on the candidates' strategies to win (e.g. in which states they visit and spend money or simply how some of battleground states were being flooded with the candidates' TV commercials, text messages or emails) or the way they were campaigning (e.g. their ground-war efforts and what the campaign rallies looked like).

The Horse-Race sub-frame was, contrarily, slightly more salient in the WP news coverage (39.5%) than in the NYT (35.3%). In the case of the WP, 9.2% of the stories also discussed, or simply presented, an opinion poll, while in the NYT opinion polls were shown in only 3% of the newspaper articles. These results suggest that the salience of the Horse-Race sub-frame is not necessarily linked to the release of new opinion polls and that the

journalists are able to extensively discuss the Horse-Race aspects of the campaign even when they do not have concrete results sustaining the discussion. Finally, approximately one out of ten stories in both newspapers somehow expressed, in an extensive way, considerations about the turnout of the election (e.g. actors asking people to vote, how to vote or simply the importance of voting in the election).

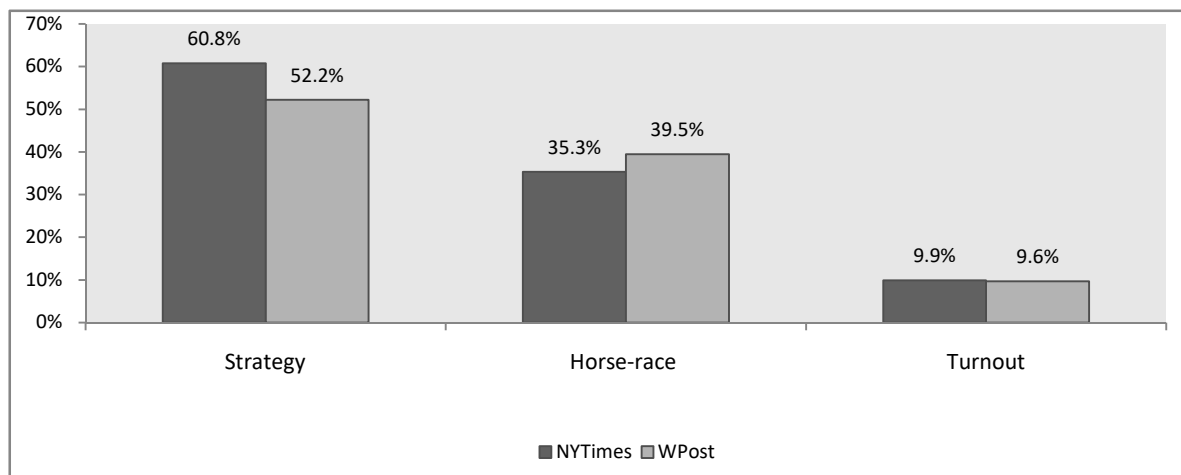


Figure 4 – Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in the news coverage of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election.

Regarding the type of attacks shown in the news coverage of the American election, the results are somehow surprising, considering the low salience that the Issues Frame had in the media (Figure 5). Even though half of the news stories showed conflict between actors, almost half of the attacks were centered on the opponent's position on certain political issues (49% in the NYT and 47% in the WP) rather than the opponent's personal traits or values (39% in the NYT and 45% in the WP). This result suggests that despite the negative tone of the campaign, the actors still tried to a certain degree to discuss political issues. In fact, one of Obama's strategies was to not only present his policies but also confront them with his opponent's views²⁴. In other words, despite the relatively high salience of conflict in the news coverage of this election, the fact that the majority of those attacks was aimed at the opponent's political issues made those articles to a certain extent, when the attacks were not deceiving, still informative to the audience.

²⁴ Candidates Agree World Is Warming, but Talk Stops There, *The New York Times* (19/10/12)

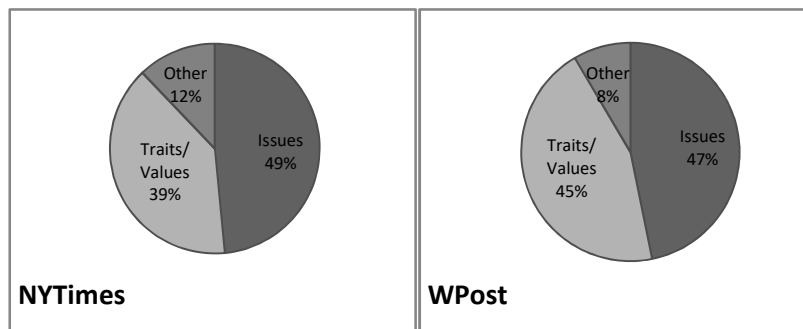


Figure 5 - Type of conflict present in the news coverage of the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election.

One other aspect of the news coverage of elections made by the American press, mentioned by Patterson (1993), is the change in the journalistic style, which is becoming increasingly more interpretative. Regarding this aspect, the results showed that both descriptive and interpretative styles of news coverage were equally salient in the case of the NYT, with the WP being in general more descriptive. Besides its more interpretative approach, the NYT was also more critical towards the political actors. In 21.6% of the stories of the NYT the journalist also questioned, challenged or criticized one political actor, while in the case of the WP it only happened in 13.6% of the news.

Overall, the analysis of the news coverage of the American elections of 2012 confirmed the low salience of substantive political issues that scholars have been mentioning. The Issues Frame was included in only 40.5% of the articles analyzed and when we consider only the first/main frame to appear in the stories the salience of political issues becomes even lower. In addition to the relative low salience of political issues in the press, also Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict were the aspects more frequently conveyed by the journalists. Bearing in mind that the Issues Frame becomes less salient in the public's minds when the strategy or conflict is also present in the same story, the results suggest that readers had relatively low opportunities to get informed, in terms of issues and policies, in the traditional media coverage of this election.

Knowing that the journalists predominantly framed the electoral campaign in terms of strategy/horse-race and conflict, it is important to see how the two U.S. candidates framed their own campaigns. If the journalists' preferences and the *media logic* are 'distorting' the "real" campaign, then we should observe a higher salience of issues in the candidate's campaign, rather than strategy and conflict. In contrast, the news coverage made by the press of the 2012 American elections can simply reflect *hollow campaigns* made by the candidates. Some journalists hinted, in the news coverage of the campaign, at this second proposition by suggesting, for example, that the main differences between the two candidates in the last

debate rested more on “tone, style and their sense of leadership than on particular policies”²⁵. Also during their campaign speeches the candidates apparently avoided delivering new proposals or plans, but instead offered, like a journalist noted in one of Romney's events, “a rhetorical repackaging of his familiar campaign agenda, building on the ‘change’ narrative” that the candidate had introduced in his campaign²⁶, or would adopt, as it was the case of Obama’s speeches, a “coach style”, that would focus the rhetoric on what type of person Americans want, while not mentioning any specific policy proposals but only goals for America²⁷. Apparently, according to some journalists, substantive policy information was absent from the campaign due to strategic considerations of the candidates. A good example of this idea was that the vice-president candidates were coached by their strategists to not bring up their own policy ideas during their debate, but instead to simply attack the opponent and talk up the running mate²⁸. In the following two sections we analyze the online campaign made by Obama and Romney to see if, indeed, the discussion of substantive political issues was absent from their online campaigns.

4.2 – Obama’s campaign on the SNS.

As we discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the Internet is rapidly becoming a central arena for political communication in modern political campaigns. However, this does not mean, at least in the case of American politics, that the more traditional ways of campaigning, like television commercials, canvassing and traditional flyers sent by post mail, has lost its importance. On the contrary, the 2012 U.S. campaign still relied strongly on these traditional campaign methods, with the candidates still spending more on stamps than on the Internet²⁹. Apparently the new technologies, by allowing candidates to better know the electorate, are even intensifying to extreme levels the use of the ‘old-school’ techniques by the political candidates. It was not rare to see reported in the U.S. press the cases of American electors getting dozens of mails, text messages or phone calls per day that in some cases would even make the person, in order to just stop the ‘political harassment’, to cast an early vote³⁰. Nevertheless the Internet, and particularly the SNS, was still widely used as a communication

²⁵ Obama and Romney Bristle From Start in Debate on Foreign Policy, *The New York Times* (23/10/12).

²⁶ With Electoral End Zone in View, Candidates Blitz Swing States, *The Washington Post* (27/10/12).

²⁷ Romney's Campaign Raised \$170 Million in September, Coming Close to Obama's Total, *The Washington Post* (16/10/12).

²⁸ VP Debate Rule No. 1: It's Not about You, *The Washington Post* (11/10/12).

²⁹ Direct mail still a campaign force, *Washington Post* (13/10/12).

³⁰ Campaigns inundate all corners of the state, *The Washington Post* (28/10/12).

platform in this campaign, with both candidates, especially Obama, making frequent use of the three SNS analyzed in this study.

As we saw, Obama's campaign was characterized and praised for the assimilation of the Social Networking Sites during the presidential election of 2008. In 2012, the President's campaign machinery not only continued to make use of the SNS for electoral purposes but it also adopted more of those tools in the campaign. A good example was Twitter, an application that was deemed "worthless" in 2008 by Obama's campaign managers and which would become a central piece of this candidate's online campaign in 2012³¹. Indeed, in 2012, Twitter was far more frequently used by Obama's campaign than more popular social media applications such as the Facebook.

Regarding the content of the messages, our analysis of the media frames used by Obama in his online campaign shows that the different platforms (Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) were also used by this candidate in slightly different ways. Twitter was the only platform where the Issues Frame was the most salient aspect, which was present in 47.2% of the posts (with the candidates' position on substantive political issues being presented in 38.3% of all articles). As the Figure 6 shows, the salience of strategy and conflict aspects was relatively low on this platform. The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was included in 33.5% of the posts and the Conflict Frame between actors was only shown in 27.9% of the Twitter posts. The relatively low amount of conflict is somehow surprising considering that even Obama's campaign officials deemed the attacks on Romney as one of the main reasons behind the president's continued edge in the opinion polls in the Midwest states³². This suggests that the higher diversity in terms of recipients of the candidate's campaign messages on the SNS, in comparison to the tailor-made television advertisement for specific regions, increases the civility in the tone used by the American politicians to communicate during electoral campaigns. Even though these results suggest that Obama's campaign on Twitter was mainly focused on the discussion of substantive political issues, the same was not observed on the other two online applications.

On Facebook and YouTube, similarly to what we found for the press, the most salient aspect was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. This frame was present in 50.6% of the Facebook posts and in an even higher proportion of YouTube videos (60.8%). Nevertheless, the amount of cases dealing with substantive political issues was, in both cases, similar to Twitter (45.6%

³¹ A Conversation With Jim Messina (December 6, 2012). La Pietra Dialogues. New York University in Florence.

³² Altered Race as Republicans Recast Romney Image, *The New York Times* (23/10/12)

in the case of Facebook, and 44.4% for YouTube). Even though the Issues Frame was not the most salient aspect in the Facebook campaign of Obama, this candidate nevertheless used the Facebook, more than the other SNS, to convey additional information regarding his policies (such as parts of the program or list with several policy measures) and general studies to substantiate and support the discussed issue or event. Regarding the Conflict Frame, the salience of this aspect in these two platforms, despite being higher than in Twitter, was also relatively low (35.4% in Strategy/Horse-Race Facebook and 30.6% in YouTube).

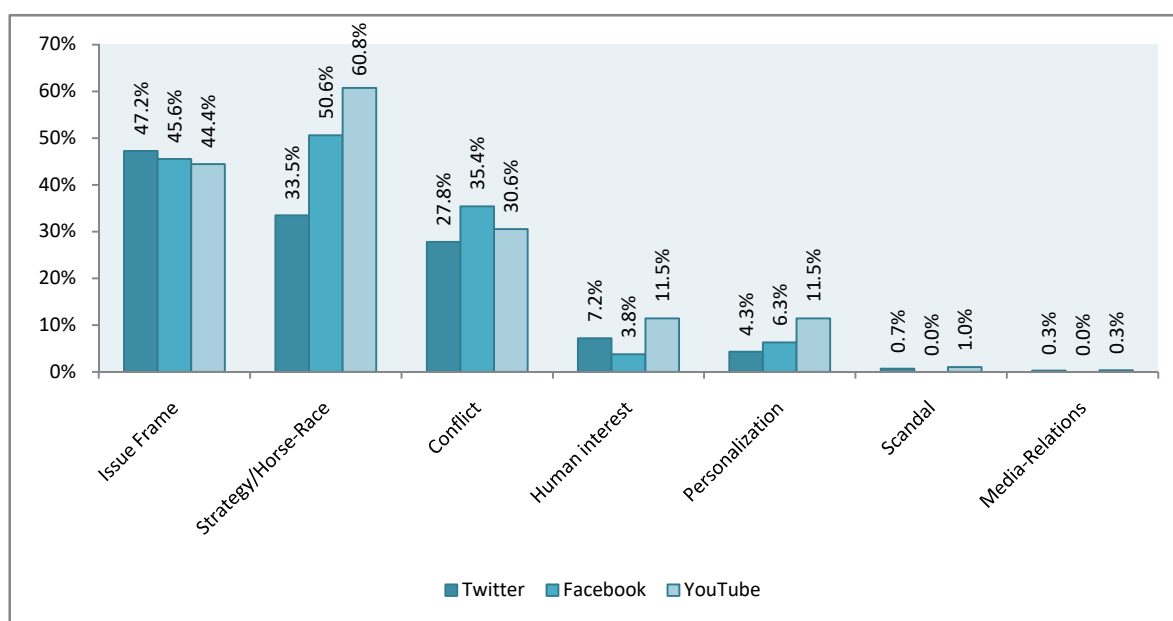


Figure 6 - Frames salience in Obama's SNS campaign.

With respect to the other frames included in the analyses, their salience was in general low. From those media frames, only two aspects are worth mentioning. The first one is the slightly higher salience of the Human-Interest and Personalization on YouTube (11.5% in both cases) compared to the other platforms. This might be related to the sound and visual component of the YouTube that makes this platform theoretically better suited for appealing to the audiences' emotions (similarly to what happens with the television in comparison to the press). The second aspect is the very low number of cases that mentioned scandals. In the case of the traditional media, as we saw, the salience of this aspect was approximately six times higher. The very few examples of posts that were framed in terms of scandal were again mostly connected to some comments about abortion legislation, by some members of the Republican party, which were considered outrageous for Obama's campaign.

When we analyze the first frame used in Obama's campaign the picture remains mostly the same with the exception of the YouTube messages (Figure 7). On this SNS, only 14.9% of the videos were primarily focused on substantive political issues. Apparently the videos included on this platform primarily had other purposes than conveying the candidate's policy messages (the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the main aspect in 52.4% of the videos). On the other two SNS, the salience of the Issues Frame as the first/main aspect of the messages was two times higher than on YouTube (31.7% on Twitter and 32.9% on Facebook). Similarly to the Issues Frame, when we look at the first and main frame in the online messages, the Conflict Frame also loses some prominence, being the central frame in only 17.71% of the YouTube videos.

Regarding the other two platforms, even though the salience of the Issues Frame was similar in both Facebook and Twitter, we can observe some differences regarding the salience of the Conflict and the Strategy/Horse-Race Frames. While the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was more salient on Facebook (43%) than on Twitter (31%), conflict was more often the central aspect in the Twitter posts (17.2%) in comparison to Facebook (11.4%). These results highlight some of the differences between these two online applications and the fact that Twitter messages are generally smaller (each message can only have 140 characters) and, therefore also generally discuss a lower number of topics. For this reason, even though the salience of conflict was in general lower on Twitter in comparison to Facebook, the Conflict Frame becomes more prominent on Twitter when we only look at the primary aspects conveyed in each message.

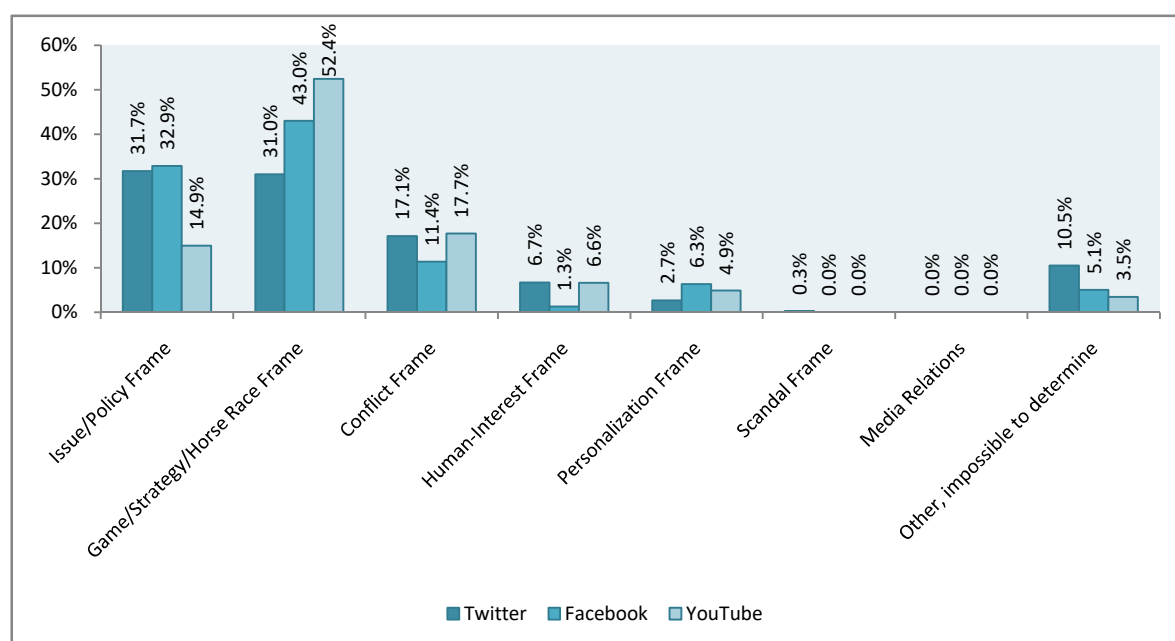


Figure 7 – First/main frame salience in Obama’s SNS campaign.

Finally, the remaining frames considered in the analysis (Human-Interest, Personalization, Scandal and Media-Relations) appeared as the central aspect of the SNS items on very few occasions. In addition to this, the Media-Relations Frame was never the first aspect presented in any of the posts and videos of the three SNS, while the Scandal Frame was never the first frame presented on Facebook and YouTube.

Concerning the nature of the issues discussed in Obama campaign it is interesting to observe that the four issues that were more salient in the news coverage of the election (Economy and Work; Society, Religion and Culture; Finances and Taxes; and National Security) were also the aspects more frequently discussed on Twitter (Figure 8). The high salience of Society, Religion and Culture aspects in the three SNS, particularly on Facebook, resulted mainly from the frequent discussion of the candidate’s position on issues related to abortion and gender equality. In the case of Facebook and YouTube, the most salient issue categories were the ones concerning the Society, Religion, and Culture (25% in Facebook and 15.6% in YouTube), while in Twitter, although the difference was small, issues concerning Economy and Work were conveyed more frequently.

Contrary to what we saw in the news coverage made by the press, some types of issues were not conveyed in Obama’s online campaign (unless if they were included together, in a similar prominence, with other types of issues and coded in the “various” category). While aspects related to immigration were absent in all SNS, other aspects such as Transport and Energy, Environmental Protection, Law and Order and Institutional Design were not discussed on Facebook. The lack of discussion about environmental issues was indeed even pointed out by the press. According to one journalist, Obama deliberately avoided speaking about the protection of the environment, differently from what he had done in its 2008 campaign, because the topic was “politically toxic in a year when economic problems are paramount”³³. Overall, these results suggest that Obama’s social media campaign was less diversified than the news coverage of the election in terms of the diversity of issues being discussed.

³³ Candidates Agree World Is Warming, but Talk Stops There, *The New York Times* (19/10/12).

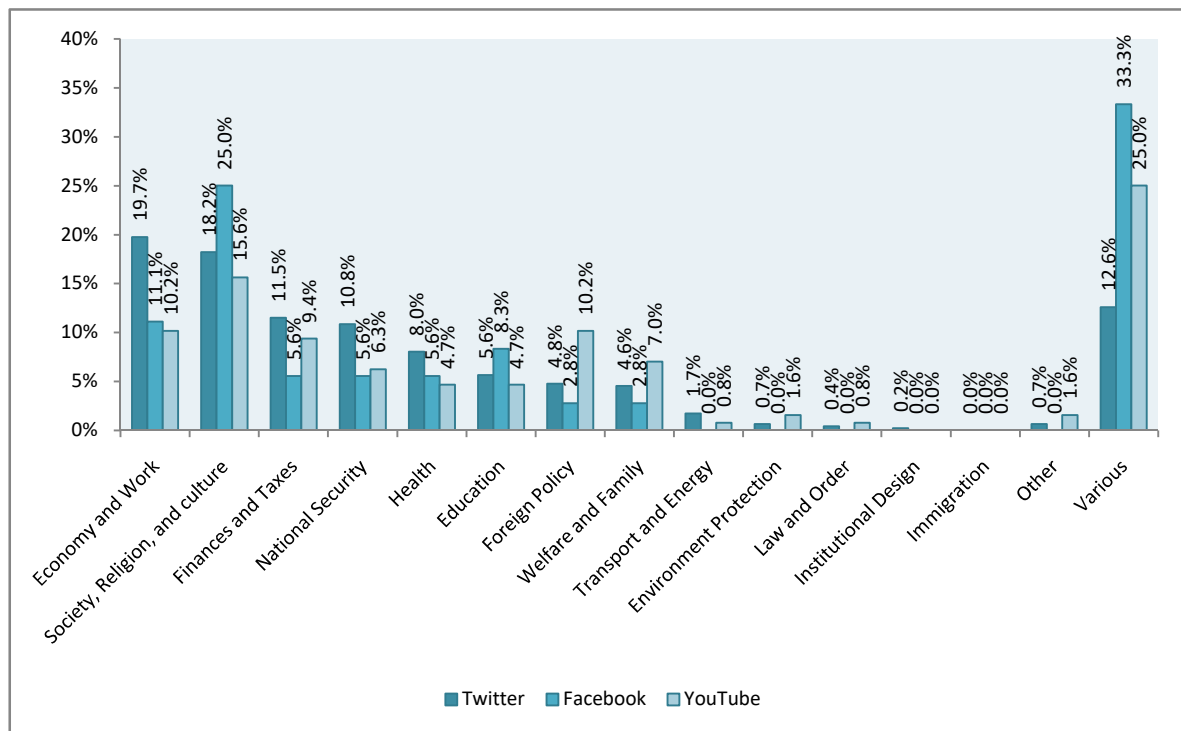


Figure 8 - Nature of political issues in Obama's SNS campaign.

As the frame analysis showed, Strategy/Horse-Race was the most salient frame in Obama's Facebook and YouTube campaigns. However, as we can see in Figure 9, and contrary to what happened in the traditional news media, the sub-frame strategy (the strategies of the candidates and how/where/when they campaign) was not the most salient aspects in Obama's online campaign, except on Twitter (9%). On Facebook and YouTube the most visible sub-frame of Strategy/Horse-Race was Turnout. In the case of YouTube, 39.9% of the videos analyzed were related to vote (i.e. simply asking people to vote for the candidate and how could they do it). This value was somehow inflated by several videos with Obama asking the electorate to vote for him, where the only difference between those videos was the name of the state addressed by the candidate.

Finally, one last aspect worth mentioning is the relatively low salience of posts asking people to make money contributions to the campaign. This is particularly interesting since in 2012 Obama had to make up for the loss of "business money that flowed to his campaign" in 2008 by turning to the contributions of small donors³⁴. One possible explanation for this is that we only analyzed four weeks of a yearlong campaign, where money starts playing a crucial role already in the early stages of the campaign.

³⁴ Presidential Candidates Are on Track For \$2 Billion, *The New York Times* (19/10/12)

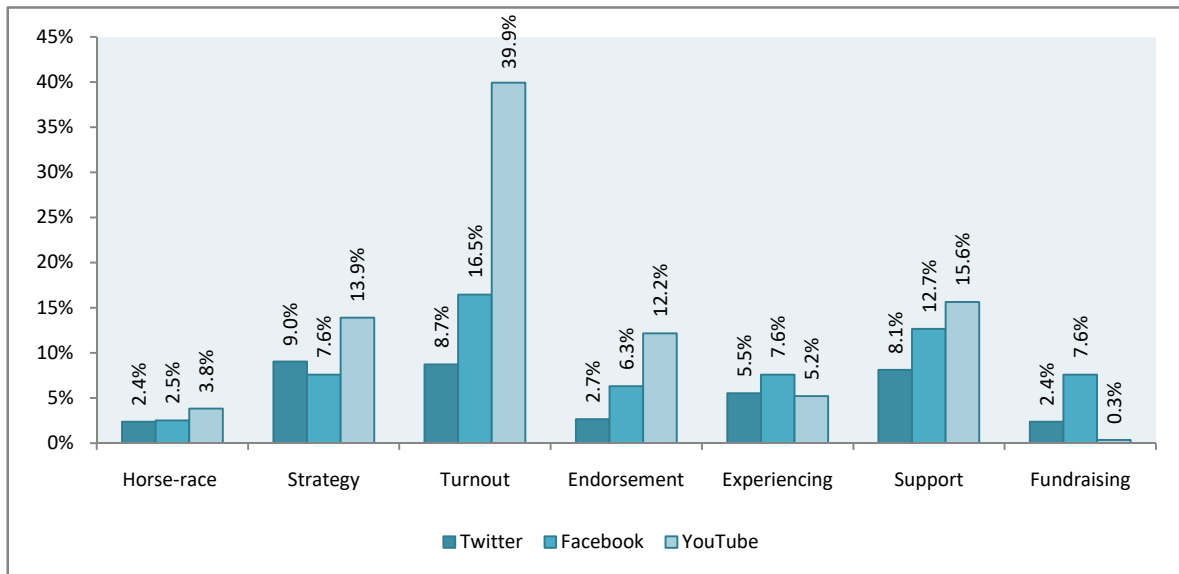


Figure 9 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in Obama's SNS campaign.

Regarding the type of the Obama's attacks on the SNS, similarly to what we found in the traditional media news coverage, the largest proportion of them were aimed at the opponent's position on certain issues (Figure 10). As already mentioned, when Obama addressed his political agenda, he usually also presented in a negative light the positions of his opponent on those issues. Even when the attacks were aimed at the opponent's personal traits and values, most of the time they were also indirectly related to opponent's political issues. A good example of this is when Romney tried to moderate some of his most conservative positions, which gave Obama the opportunity to frequently attack the credibility and coherence of his opponent. As a result of these attacks, the catchy expression "Romnesia" emerged on the Internet, which Obama himself also adopted and started to often use in his campaign³⁵.

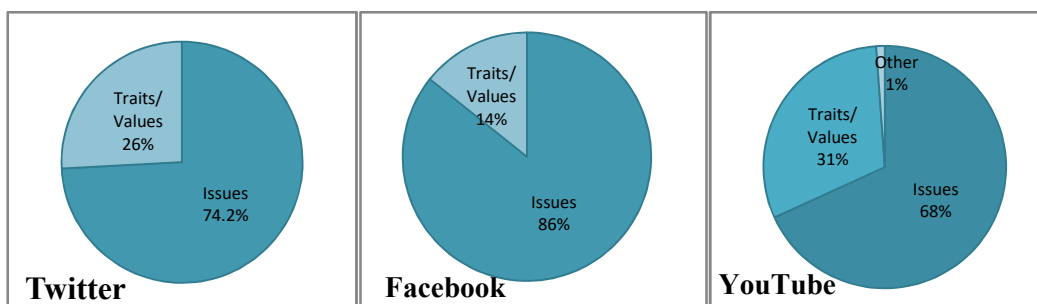


Figure 10 – Type of attack in Obama's SNS campaign.

³⁵ Sharpening the Message For the Final Push, *The New York Times* (22/10/12)

Finally, when we look at the additional information included in Obama's Twitter and Facebook posts, the results suggest that those two applications were used differently, or for different purposes (Figure 11). In the case of Twitter, most of the posts (54.5%) did not include any additional content, meaning that the conveyed messages were shorter than the 140 characters allowed by this social media. When additional content was included on this platform it was most of the time non-journalistic articles (mostly articles published in Obama's official campaign website), campaign videos or simply a picture. Traditional news media articles were completely absent in Obama's Twitter campaign. This aspect is interesting since Obama also excluded from its campaign website in 2012 a section dedicated to traditional media releases about his campaign. To some extent, this further suggests that Obama's online campaign tried to distance itself from the mainstream media news coverage that the candidate received. On Facebook, however, almost all posts also directed the readers to another source of information. It included mostly non-journalistic articles (64.6%), simply a video (11.4%) or an image (19%). A few Facebook posts included a link containing a live streaming video of the campaign (2.5%) or an article from the traditional media (2.5%).

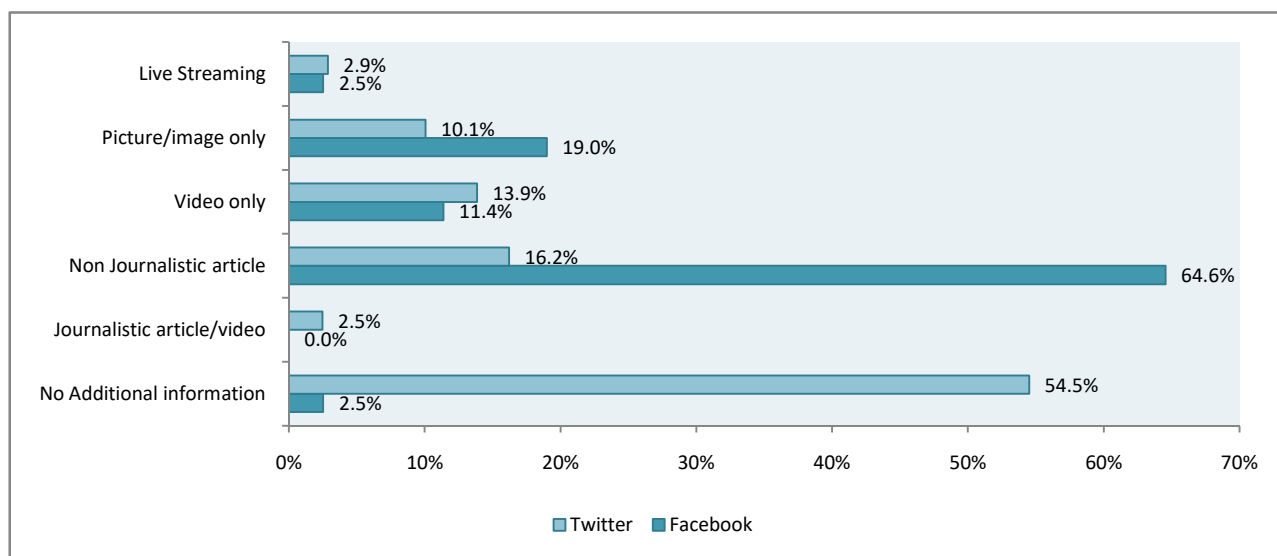


Figure 11 - Additional content included in Obama's Facebook/Twitter posts.

4.3 – Romney's campaign on the SNS.

During the campaign, the Republican candidate, Mitt Romney, expressed some discontent about how the traditional media was neglecting the issues he tried to convey in his campaign. As he put it in one campaign event, "my job is to lay out a positive vision for the future of the

country, and their job [the journalists] is to make sure no one else finds out about it”³⁶. This is an interesting remark considering the objective of this research. This situation, however, did not push him to use more the SNS to share his ideas in the last weeks before election day. Compared to Obama, Romney’s campaign made considerably less use of both Twitter and YouTube. Regarding the frames used in his online campaign, there were considerable differences between the three SNS. As the Figure 12 shows, the salience of the Issues Frame in this candidate's campaign ranged from a low of 31.2% on Facebook to 67.4% on YouTube, suggesting that Romney’s campaign conveyed the candidate's positions on substantive political issues mainly through videos. However, it was also in YouTube that the Conflict Frame was more salient (59.2%).

Both the Conflict Frame (29.5%) and the Issues Frame (31.2%) had their lowest salience in the Facebook campaign. Different to Borah (2014), we did not find evidence that Romney conducted a more negative campaign on Facebook compared to Obama. Romney mainly used Facebook to address aspects related to the campaign strategies (64.8%). In the case of Twitter, the three main frames (Issues, Strategy/Horse-Race, and Conflict) were used roughly the same number of times (47.4% in the case of Strategy, and 46.5% for the other two aspects).

The salience of the remaining frames included in this analysis was in general low in the three social media analyzed. Two of the media frames, the Scandal and the Media-Relations, were completely absent from the online campaign of the Republican candidate. Finally, similarly to what we saw in Obama’s online campaign, the Personalization and Human-Interest Frames were also more salient on YouTube.

³⁶ Amid Brutal Campaign, a Respite. With Jokes. *The New York Times* (19/10/12).

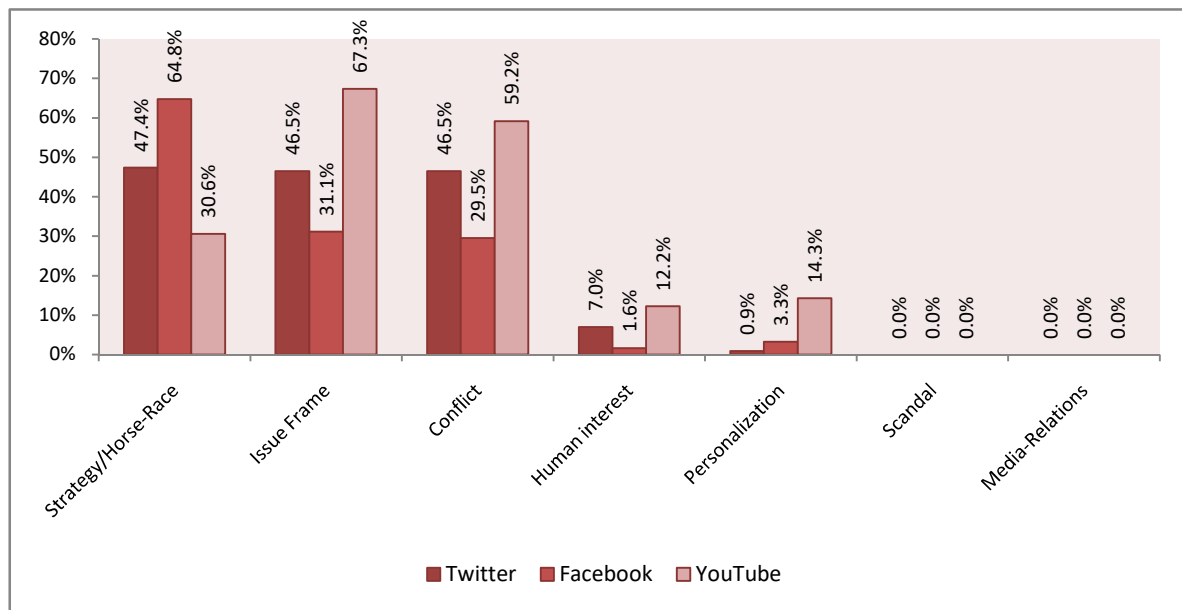


Figure 12 – Frames salience in Romney’s SNS campaign.

When we look at the first/main frames presented in Romney’s online campaign, the results show, when we look at Facebook and Twitter that both Issues and Conflict Frames become less salient, while the Strategy Frame remains a prominent aspect of the campaign messages on these two platforms (Figure 13). In the case of Facebook, only 8.2% of the posts were primarily focused on conflict/attacks between the candidates. Even more interesting is the fact that on YouTube only 24.5% of the posts had the Issues Frame as the main aspect of the message. This means that although substantive political issues were overall the most salient aspect conveyed in Romney’s YouTube videos, most of the time they were not the first/main frame discussed in the messages in the majority of those videos. Similar to Obama, Romney conveyed and discussed political issues jointly with attacks on and criticism of his opponent. This is an interesting finding that indicates that both U.S. candidates used the social media not only to mobilize supporters but also to persuade an undecided faction of the electorate.

Regarding the Strategy Frame, this aspect not only remains dominant in the Facebook campaign but it also becomes more salient in the campaign conducted on Twitter. In the case of YouTube, both Issues and Conflict Frames were more frequently presented as the primary aspect of the messages than the Strategy/Horse-Race aspects. Overall, the results show us that only on very few occasions the presentation or discussion of political issues was the primary aspect of Romney's online messages (14% on Twitter, 21.3% on Facebook, and 24.5% on

YouTube). Instead, the online campaign of this candidate primarily focused on conflict, in the case of YouTube, and Strategy/Horse-Race, in the case of Twitter and Facebook.

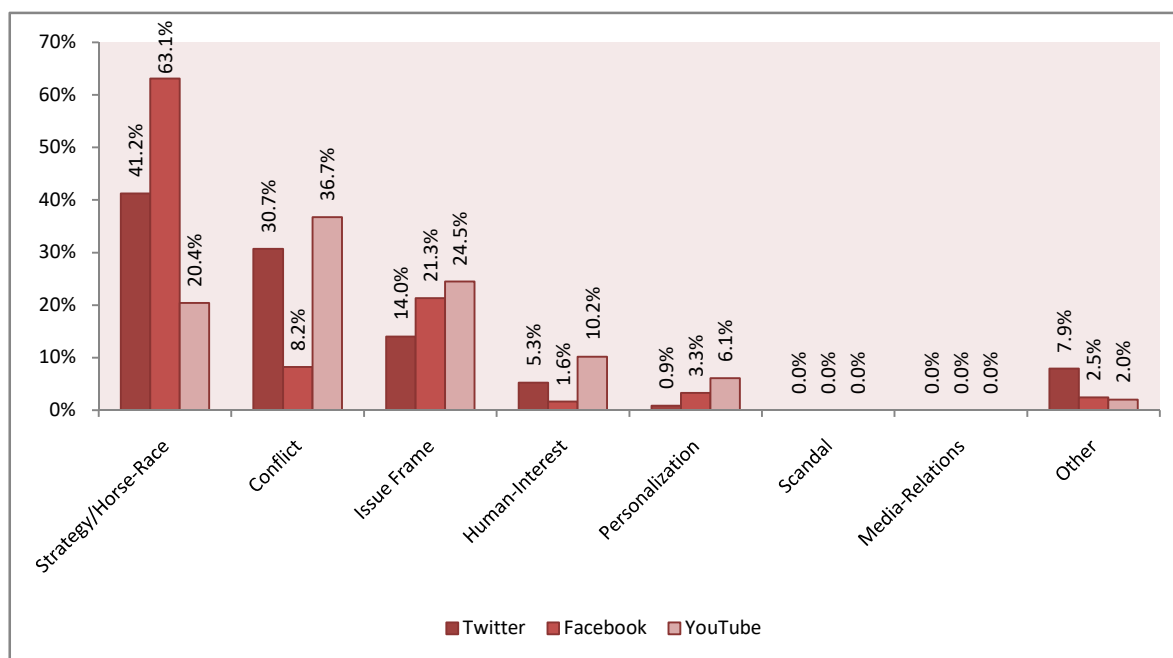


Figure 13 - First frame in Romney's SNS campaign.

When we look at the nature of the issues discussed, Romney's online campaign, compared to Obama's, was apparently less diversified (Figure 14). Five topics in our typology (Environmental Protection; Law and Order; Institutional Design and Welfare and Family) were not discussed, at least not in a predominant way, in any of the messages conveyed in the three SNS accounts analyzed. Other topics were prominently discussed on only one of those platforms. Issues related to Education or Health were only discussed on Facebook, while YouTube was the only platform where the Migration Immigration category was included. The absence of the issues related to environmental protection reinforces the claim, mentioned before, that the candidates avoided this particular topic for strategic reasons, which could potentially alienate the electorate. As we will see later in the case of the Brazilian presidential election in 2014, it is a risk to bring to the campaign the topic of renewable energies, when a country is strongly dependent on fossil fuel and the economy is not performing well (which would mean extra costs to the citizens). These results give some support to the *hollow campaigns* hypothesis, regarding the diversity of issues discussed in the campaign. Overall, even though the press had a clear fixation on polls and campaign strategies, some important issues were apparently absent from the media news coverage of the election simply because the candidates chose to avoid them.

Regarding the categories of issues that were more salient in Romney's campaign, similarly to the news coverage of the election, the Economy and Work was the most frequently discussed topic in all of the three SNS. The second most salient category was not, however, the same in all of the three SNS. While on Twitter and Facebook the second most salient category was Finances and Taxes (26.4% and 15.8% respectively), in the case of YouTube the second most discussed topic was Society, Religion and Culture (12.1%). Overall, these results suggest that Romney online campaign was very strategic regarding the type of issues that he chose to convey and discuss. Making use of his reputation as a successful business man and manager, and taking advantage of an economy that was not performing so well, Romney's campaign messages primarily revolved around the economic growth, unemployment and tax cuts.

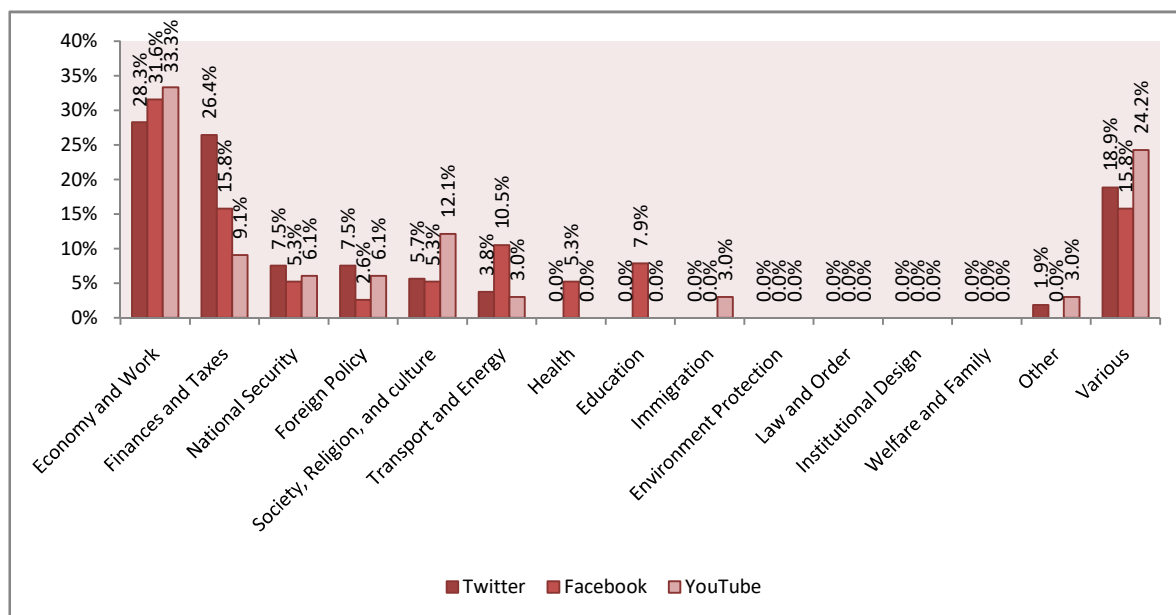


Figure 14 - Nature of issues in Romney's SNS campaign.

As we saw in the Figures 12 and 13, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the dominant frame in Romney's Twitter and Facebook messages. However, regarding the specific sub-aspects of this media frame that were more frequently discussed in the online messages, we can see that considerations about winning or losing in the elections were not present in any of the social media (Figure 15). This suggests that none of the online content conveyed by this candidate dealt extensively with aspects related to opinion polls, the candidates' chances of winning or the consequences of the election. As for the remaining sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race, similarly to Obama's online campaign, also Romney's communication varied on the different online platforms analyzed. In the case of Twitter, the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame resulted from the discussion of aspects related to turnout (13.2%),

experiencing the candidate's campaign through the Internet (11.4%), and asking for support or recruiting volunteers for the campaign (13.2%). Similarly, also on YouTube the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame mainly resulted from the messages that included aspects related to turnout (12.2%), experiencing the campaign online (10.2%), and also the way the candidate was conducting his campaign (10.2%). Contrarily, the sub-aspects of Strategy/Horse-Race discussed on Facebook were completely different. Romney's campaign used the Facebook mainly to recruit volunteers and supporters (21.3%) and for fundraising purposes. In fact, 32% of the Facebook posts presented Internet users with the opportunity to contribute to this candidate's campaign, through simple donations, selling merchandise, or even prize contests.

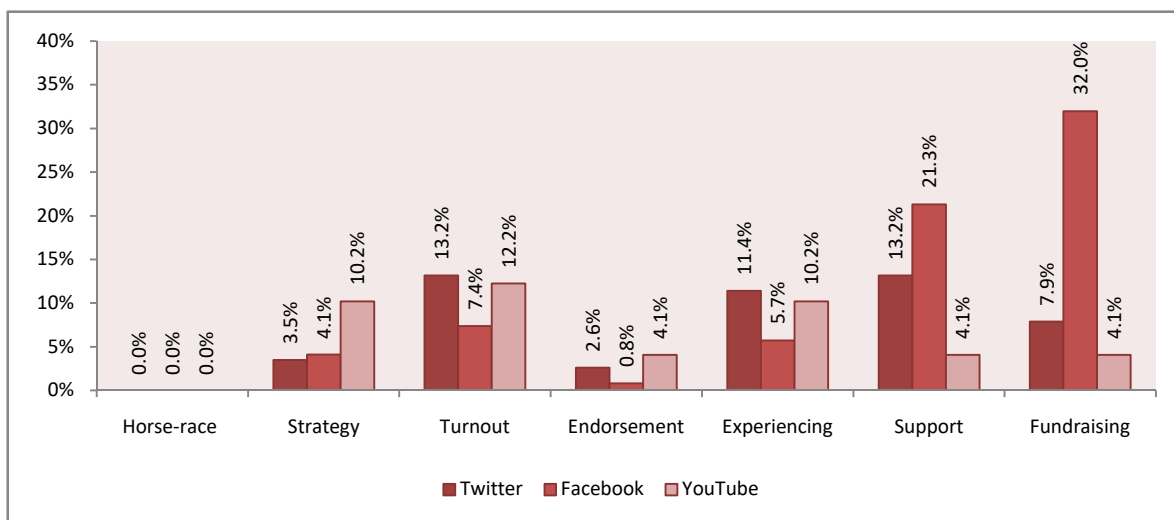


Figure 15 – Strategy sub-frames in Romney's SNS campaign.

It is curious to see that fundraising features were more salient in Romney's SNS campaign, compared to its opponent, considering that a much smaller proportion of Romney's campaign budget came from small donations. While Romney's campaign money came mostly from wealthy donors that contributed with the maximum amount allowed, and only 22% of the cash came from small donations, in Obama's case the percentage of money that came from small contributions was higher than 50%³⁷. Nevertheless, in the last four months of the U.S. presidential campaign of 2012, the online fundraising efforts of Romney were, as the results suggest, higher than the ones of his opponent.

With respect to the type of conflict in Romney's SNS campaign, the results show somewhat a similar pattern to the one observed in the media news coverage and in Obama's campaign. The attacks on issues were again the most salient type of conflict in all SNS

³⁷ Presidential Candidates Are on Track For \$2 Billion (19/10/12)

(Figure 16), reinforcing the idea that, in the 2012 U.S. campaign, the discussion of substantive political issues often came along with conflict and attacks aimed at the opponent's views on those issues. In the case of Facebook, all of the 29 attacks coded were addressed to the opponent's political issues. From all three platforms analyzed, YouTube had the highest percentage of attacks aimed at the opponent's personal traits or values, which nevertheless only amounted to 10% of the attacks shown in this candidate's videos.

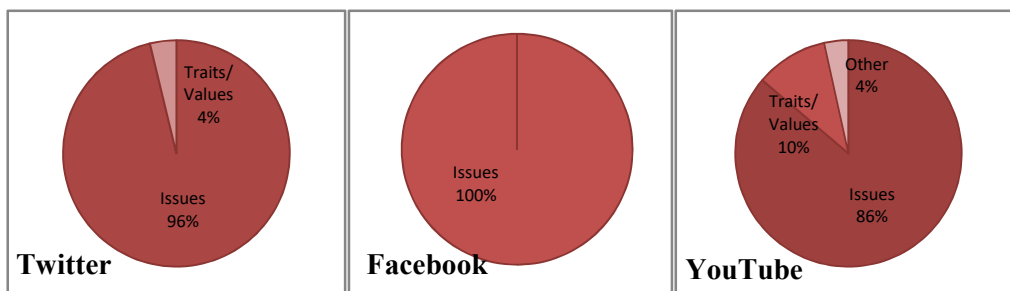


Figure 16 – Type of conflict in Romney's SNS campaign.

Finally, regarding the additional content presented in the campaign messages, all Romney's posts on Facebook included some additional source of information (Figure 17). Most of the posts (70.5%) included a link to the candidate's website or another non-journalistic article. The remaining posts included either a video (18%), or an image (7.4%) or simply a link to a video streaming the candidates (7.4%). In the case of Twitter, also the majority of posts added some extra information (75.4%). A relatively high proportion of Twitter posts included a non-journalistic article (37.7%) or a campaign video (31.6%). Pictures, articles written by journalists or live streaming videos were considerably less used. Articles from the traditional news media, similarly to what we saw in Obama's case, were practically absent in Romney's online campaign.

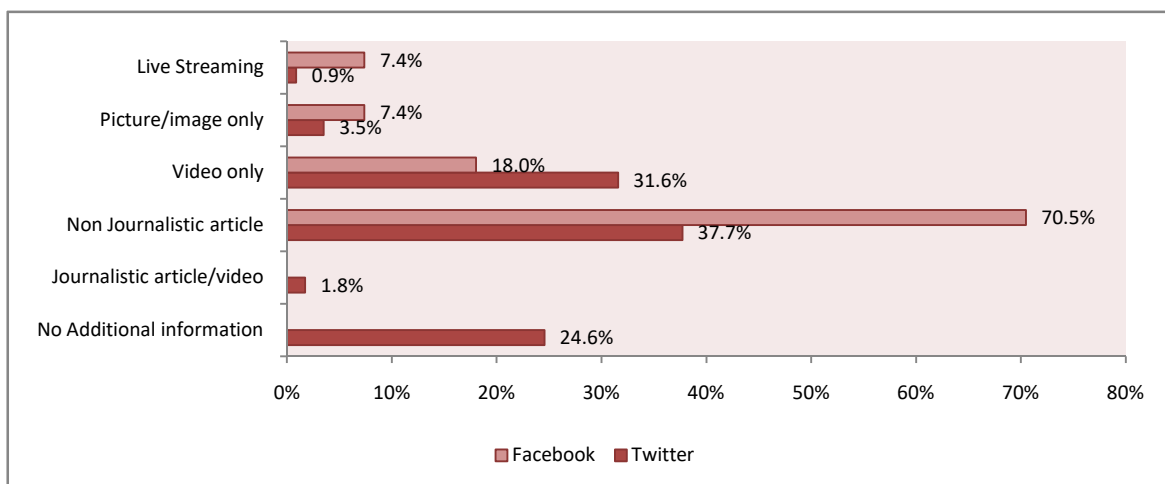


Figure 17 - Additional information presented in Romney's SNS campaign.

4.4 – The U.S. presidential elections of 2012, uninformative news or hollow campaign?

As we saw in this chapter, the news coverage of the American elections, as media scholars have theorized and observed, gave more salience to aspects of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict between the actors. The *media logic* concept argues that this trend of reporting the elections results from the journalists' distortion of the candidates' "real" campaign that made us hypothesize that a campaign "framed" by a politician would be considerably different. However, as we saw, the candidate's campaign was framed in different ways not only by the two candidates but also by the same candidate on the different SNS.

In this section, we compare the traditional media news coverage made by the press with the candidates' campaigns on social media, by giving the same weight to the posts of both candidates on the three SNS analyzed. In other words, the overall salience of a particular aspect in the SNS campaign is the average of its salience on each SNS (i.e. Twitter, Facebook and YouTube) of each candidate/party. This means that, in this U.S. case, a Facebook post of Romney had the same weight of, for example, a Twitter post of Obama. When we compare the two media the results give some support to our *Uninformative News* hypothesis (Figure 18). As this hypothesis predicted, the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames was higher in the press in comparison to the candidates' campaign on the SNS. While the two most frequent media frames in the news coverage of this election were the Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames, in the online campaign of the two candidates the two most frequently discussed aspects were the Strategy/Horse-Race and substantive political issues. In fact, the difference between the overall frequency of the Strategy/Horse-Race and Issues Frames in the social media was lower than 1%.

With respect to the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame in the two types of media, the differences were substantial. While in the news coverage this frame was present in 77.6% of the articles, in the case of the SNS campaign it was only included in 47.9% of the candidates' posts. With respect to the Conflict Frame, its salience was also greater in the press compared to the candidates' SNS campaigns; however, the difference in the case of Conflict was not as substantial. Conflict between campaign actors was shown in 49.8% of the items for the press and in 38.2% of the social media messages.

Regarding the Issues Frame, the difference was also in the direction predicted by the *Uninformative News* hypothesis, being more salient in the candidates' campaign (47%) than in the news coverage (40.5%). Even though, as we saw, the candidates were criticized in the

press for avoiding the discussion of substantive political issues, the results suggest that the two candidates put slightly more effort than the press to frame their campaign messages in terms of political issues. This is, however, a general picture of the campaign without taking in consideration the nature of the issues discussed.

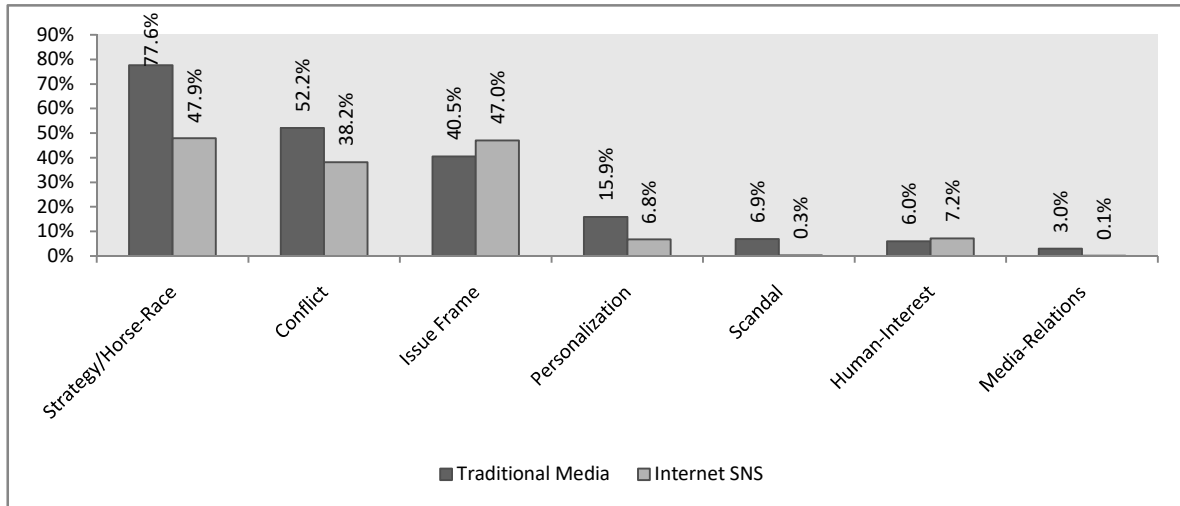


Figure 18 – Salience of frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2012 U.S. elections.

The Human-Interest Frame was also more salient in the SNS campaign, but in this case the difference was negligible. For the remaining frames, (Personalization Frame, Scandal Frame and Media-Relations Frame), they were all considerably more salient in the press news coverage than in the SNS campaign. It is interesting to note that the traditional media was considerably more likely to discuss political scandals (7%), an aspect practically absent from the candidate's online messages (0.3%). However, in the U.S. campaign, the scandals discussed were mostly related to gaffes and statements of political actors that were perceived as a scandal, rather than cases of corruption or inappropriate behavior of some political actors.

If we compare the SNS campaigns of the two candidates with the newspaper articles exclusively focused on one of the candidates (Table 7), we can see that Obama received the most "distorted" news coverage regarding the salience of the Issues and Conflict. While 45.8% of Obama's SNS content included the Issues Frame, only 30% of the newspaper articles, which were exclusively focused on this candidate, dealt with substantive political issues. The same can be said about conflict, where the proportion of newspaper articles solely focused on Obama that included this aspect were 18.8 percent points higher than in this candidate's social media campaign. In other words, Obama's campaign on social media was considerably less negative than how the press depicted the campaign of this candidate. In the case of Romney, regarding the salience of those two media frames, the news coverage

mirrored better the campaign conducted by this candidate on the Internet. It is however important to stress that, in the case of U.S., journalists tend to write longer news pieces and, for this reason, a relatively small proportion of the articles deal exclusively with only one of the two candidates.

Table 7 - Salience of Issues and Conflict in the SNS campaign and newspaper articles exclusively focused on one of the U.S. candidates³⁸.

	Issues		Conflict	
	Obama	Romney	Obama	Romney
News Coverage	30%	43.9%	50%	53.7%
SNS Campaign	45.8%	48.3%	31.2%	45%
News – SNS	-15.8	-4.4	18.8	8.7

When we look at the first frame presented in the newspaper articles and SNS posts the picture changes slightly (Figure 19). With respect to the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, this aspect remains more salient in the press than in the social media. However, this frame also becomes by far the most salient aspect in the SNS campaigns. The Issues Frame, on the other hand, remains more salient in the SNS campaign, with the difference between social media and press slightly increasing. The Issues Frame was the first and main aspect in only 14.3% of the newspaper articles, even though, as we had seen, this aspect had been discussed in more than 40% of the content analyzed from the press. The main reason for this difference is that the newspaper articles, particularly in the U.S. case, are in general longer and deal in an extensive way with different aspects of an event. This means that when the traditional media uses the Issues Frame in the story, this frame is often not the first to appear in the piece, being instead usually the strategy and race aspects of the campaign. On the other hand, Twitter posts are often shorter (if they do not have any additional content) and include fewer frames. Hence, when we compare the overall salience of each media frame with the frames that were used first in each article or social media item, then the differences between the two media become more evident.

When we consider the first frames, conflict between the actors becomes more significant on the SNS (20.3%) than in the traditional news media coverage of the elections

³⁸ Number/percentage of newspaper articles focused exclusively on one of the candidates: Obama (30/6.5%); Romney(41/8.9%).

(10.2%). This means that, similarly to the Issues Frame, even though the newspaper articles often include in the articles conflict between actors, this conflict is rarely the primary aspect discussed in those articles. On the SNS, on the other hand, even though the Conflict Frame is not as frequent as it is in the press, it is more often the first frame conveyed in the messages or videos.

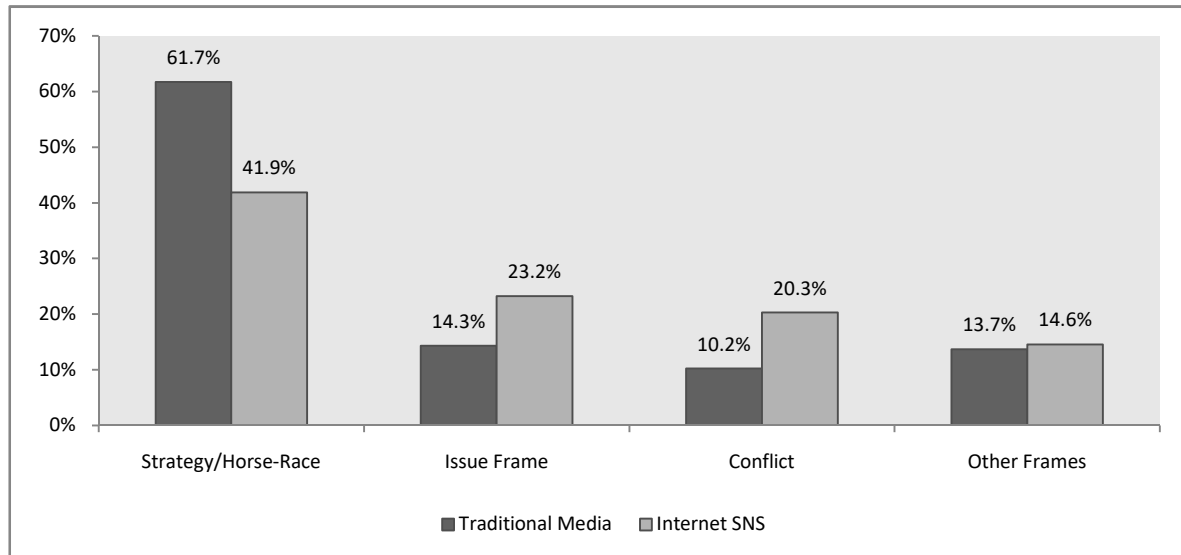


Figure 19 - First frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2012 U.S. elections.

Regarding the type of issues that were mostly discussed in this election, we can identify a pattern between the news media and the SNS (Figure 20). The five categories of issues that were more salient in the press (Economy and Work; Society, Religion and Culture; National Security; Finances and Taxes; and Foreign Policy) were also the most salient ones in the SNS campaign. The results suggest that in general the press focused on the types of issue that were more frequently conveyed by the candidates. Out of the 13 types of issues, seven of them were more salient in the SNS, and the remaining six were instead more salient in the news coverage of the election. If, on the one hand, we cannot say that the press neglected issues that were relevant in the candidates' campaign, on the other hand, some issues categories such as Immigration, Law and Order and Institutional Design were apparently considerably more salient in the press. In these cases, contrary to what was suggested by Grabber (1976), we could not find support that traditional media almost never take the initiative to explore issues that are not salient to the campaign actors. On the contrary, as we mentioned regarding the environmental issues, the journalist sometimes took the initiative to address issues that the candidates deliberately avoided for electoral considerations³⁹.

³⁹ Candidates Agree World Is Warming, but Talk Stops There, *The New York Times* (19/10/12)

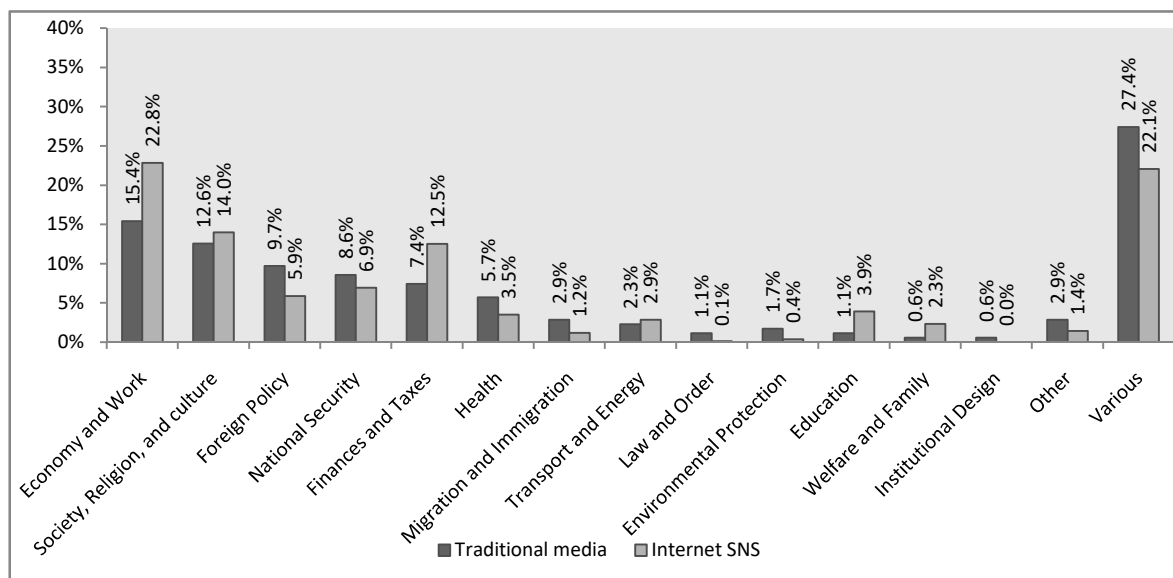


Figure 20 - Type of issues in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2012 U.S. elections.

In sum, our analysis of the media frames used by the press and candidates during the U.S. campaign showed us that the journalists reported the campaign mainly in terms of the candidates' strategies, how they campaign and winning or losing in general, to the detriment of the discussion of substantive political issues. When we consider the main media frames used, the press primarily used the Issues Frame in only 14.3% of its articles about the election. On the other hand, the candidates' campaign on the SNS used the frames of Strategy/Horse-Race and Issues with the same frequency. Overall, the results of the analysis of the 2012 U.S. campaign give some support to the *Uninformative News* hypothesis elaborated in the previous chapter.

The next chapter analyzes the salience of the different media frames in the Italian parliamentary election of 2013. As we will see, contrary to the idea of an American exceptionalism when reporting political events, the news coverage made by the Italian journalists did not differ considerably from their U.S. counterparts.

Chapter Five – News Coverage and Online Campaign of the Italian Parliamentary Elections of 2013

5.1 – The news coverage of the Italian parliamentary elections of 2013.

The 2013 parliamentary election in Italy took place on February 24-25 and was won by a center-left coalition led by Pier Luigi Bersani's Democratic Party (PD). The parties in this coalition received, in total, 29.5% of the popular vote, winning a big majority in the Chamber of Deputies but failing to get absolute majority in the senate. Even though, when the campaign started, the PD had a clear advantage in the polls, a series of political scandals and original campaign stunts eventually increased the competitiveness of the election and the uncertainty in its outcome. The center-right coalition, which was led by former prime-minister Silvio Berlusconi's People of Freedom (PdL), started with unimpressive vote intention figures much lower than PD but carried out in this regard an impressive recovery during the last weeks of the campaign. In the end, the coalition of parties led by PdL received 29.1% of the votes, failing to win an absolute majority of parliament seats by only 0.4% of the votes.

Another surprise in this election was the Five Star Movement (M5S), a recently created party that was led during the campaign by the actor and comedian Beppe Grillo. With 25.5% of vote share, the M5S was the most voted single party of the election. On the other hand, the center coalition, led by the incumbent prime-minister Mario Monti and his newly created party (Civic Choice - SC), received only around 10% of the vote. A result much lower than what early opinion polls predicted and what the members of the coalition initially expected. In fact, when the official campaign started, the opinion polls showed Scelta Civica ahead of M5S in terms of vote intention⁴⁰.

This chapter analyzes the campaigns that these four parties conducted on the SNS and compares those campaigns to the news coverage made by the Italian press. Similarly to what we did in the previous chapter, we are interested here in examining how journalists and parties framed, in the press and in the social media, the 2012 Italian elections. In this regard, this chapter follows structure of the previous one. It starts by examining how the press framed the election and subsequently analyzes the media frames that the four most voted parties (PD, PdL, SC and M5S) used in their online campaigns. Finally, the last section of this chapter

⁴⁰ PdL, sì dal 40% dei «vecchi» elettori Al Pd (68%) il record di fedeltà, *Corriere della Sera* (27/01/13).

compares the traditional media coverage of the election with the parties' campaign, in order to understand if there were significant differences between the media frames used by journalists and parties in this election.

Regarding the news coverage of the Italian elections of 2012, the results show that, similarly to the U.S. example, the most salient frames were again the Strategy/Horse-Race and the Conflict Frames (Figure 21). The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was used in 53.94% of the news articles of *Corriere della Sera*, and in an even higher proportion in the case of the newspaper *La Repubblica* (64%). The second most salient frame was again the Conflict Frame with 44.2% of the stories in *Corriere* and 59% of *Repubblica* showing some sort of conflict between the actors. This attraction for conflict by the Italian press, in order to sell more newspapers, was even discussed by the Italian journalists themselves⁴¹.

The number of news articles dealing extensively with substantive political issues was identical and relatively low in both newspapers. In the case of *Corriere*, 29.6% of the news included the Issues Frame. Furthermore, the positions or opinion of political parties, regarding substantive policy aspects, were conveyed in only 23.4% of the articles. Similarly, in *Repubblica*, the Issues Frame was used in 29.1% of the stories, with the parties' position on those issues being included in 25.1% of this newspaper's articles. Overall, the media logic of reporting elections was again evident in the press coverage of the 2013 Italian election, being slightly more accentuated in the case of the *La Repubblica*. There were, nevertheless, some good examples of news pieces where the programs of the parties were thoroughly analyzed. A good example in *Corriere* was an article making use of an Oxford economic model to measure the economic impact of the political programs of the main Italian parties⁴².

Besides the salience of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames, also a relatively high number of stories in these two newspapers dealt with Scandals related to the parties and politicians. Contrary to the case of the U.S. where the scandals were exclusively related to gaffes and statements of politicians that were considered a scandal, in the Italian case they also include cases of questionable behavior of politicians connected to their public offices (e.g. the connection of PD to bad management practices that were revealed one month before election day and led to the bailout of the oldest Italian bank "Monte dei Paschi di Siena") and their personal lives (e.g. the fake curriculum of the leader of the newly created party *Fare per Fermare il Declino*). The Scandal Frame was used in 12.17% of the news articles in *Corriere* and 20.7% of the news pieces published by *La Repubblica*. In fact, the salience of this frame

⁴¹ Luna, la berlusconi "Ribelle" che sorrise sulle "cene eleganti", *Corriere della Sera* (01/02/13).

⁴² Quanto costano i programmi dei partiti, *Corriere della Sera* (18/02/13).

is not higher simply because the press, particularly the *Corriere della Sera*, often created a specific section in their newspapers for those scandals involving political actors and parties, which included some news articles that could have, otherwise, been placed in the newspapers' section about the election. In a way, the salience of political scandals in the Italian press during the 2013 general election was in fact even higher than these results already suggest.

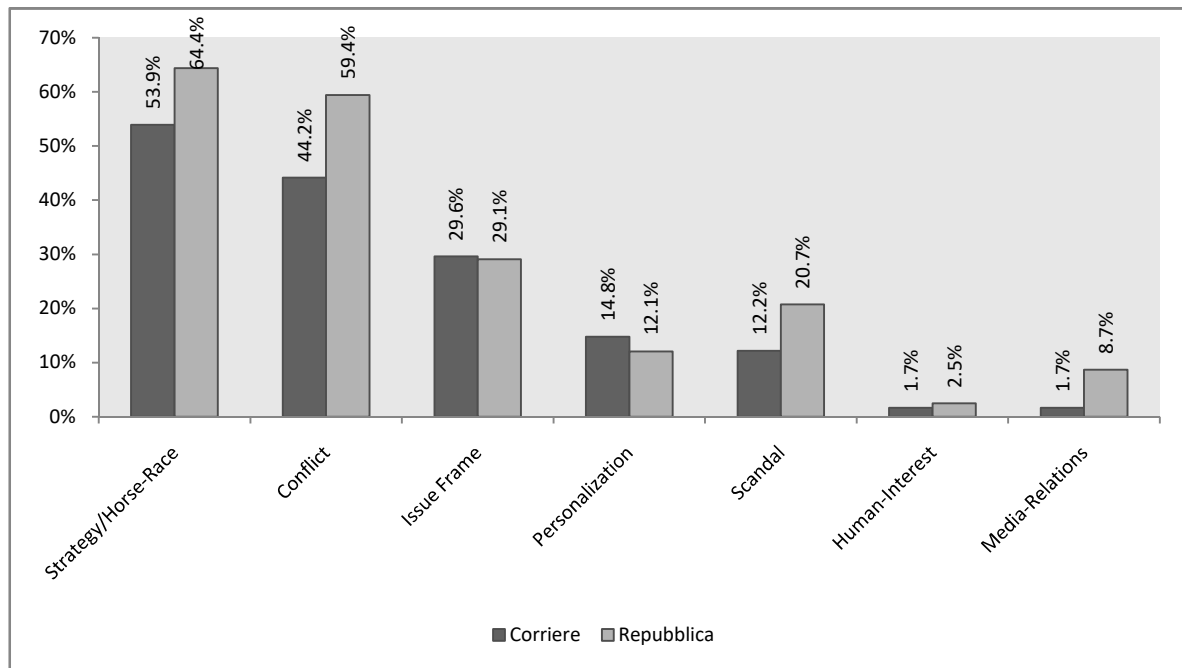


Figure 21 - Frames present in the news coverage of the 2013 Italian elections.

When we look at the first frames presented in the traditional media, the Strategy/Horse-Race remains the most salient aspect in the Italian news coverage of the election (Figure 22). Stories mainly concerned with the parties' strategies, their position on the race and how they campaign were the primary topic in 41.05% of the articles in *Corriere* and 45.8% in *Repubblica*. On the other hand, both Conflict and Issues Frames become considerably less salient in the news coverage. Again, the results show us that both Issues and Conflict Frames were seldom the first and main aspect conveyed in the newspaper articles. Nevertheless, when we look at the first media frames presented in the articles, the Issues Frame become the second most salient aspect in the news coverage made by the *Corriere della Sera*, appearing in 17% of its articles. In the case of *Repubblica* the second most salient frame is Conflict, being the primary aspect in 18.6% of its news pieces. One interesting aspect these results show is that, in the news coverage of *La Repubblica*, political scandals were, compared to substantive political issues, more often the first and main aspect that the articles

discussed. In other words, in this particular newspaper, the number of articles that primarily focused on political scandals brought up during the campaign was, curiously, higher than the number of articles primarily focused on the conveyance and discussion of substantive political issues. To a certain extent, this result suggest that the journalists and editors of this particular newspaper found political scandals more newsworthy than the position of the Italian parties on the different political issues raised during the campaign.

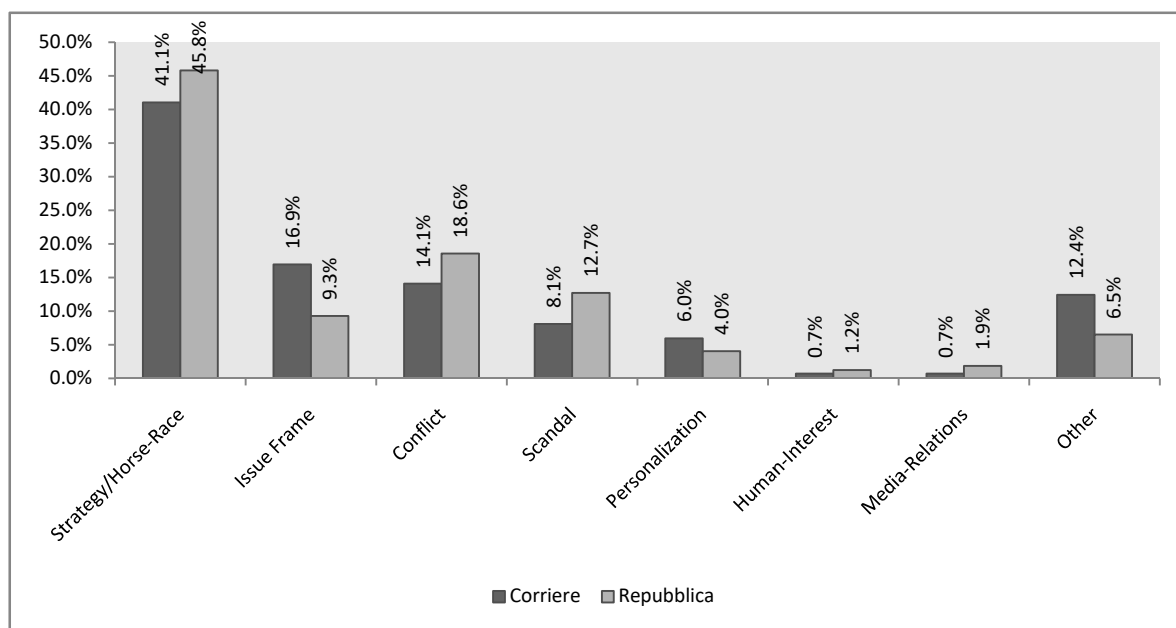


Figure 22 - The main/first frame present in the news coverage of the 2013 Italian elections.

Not only was the salience of the Issues Frame low in the news coverage of the Italian election, but also the variety of political issues' topics discussed in those articles was relatively small (Figure 23). These results, however, might in part reflect the campaigns conducted by the Italian parties. According to some journalists⁴³, and also the director of the Italian Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria)⁴⁴, a detailed discussion of substantive political issues was absent from the campaign of main Italian political parties, with the candidates instead focusing almost exclusively on only one pledge, shared by all of them, to reduce taxes. The content analysis of the Italian press indeed shows that two categories of issues, the Economy/Work and Finances/Taxes, monopolized the press coverage of the Italian election. The economic crisis that lead to the end of Berlusconi's government and the austerity measures that were then implemented by the new technocratic government, headed by Monti, became the most prominent aspects that the traditional media reported and

⁴³ Sul fisco la grande partita elettorale Casa e imprese in tutti i programmi, *Corriere della Sera* (04/02/13)

⁴⁴ Lavoro e impresa contano poco un Quarto del PIL fuori dalle Urne, *Corriere della Sera* (09/02/13)

discussed. There were, however some differences between the two newspapers analyzed. While in Corriere the most salient category was Economy and Work, being the main discussed topic in 29% of the articles that dealt with political issues, in La Repubblica the type of issues more frequently conveyed were the ones related to Finances and Taxes (35.11% of the articles with the Issues Frame).

The remaining categories either had low visibility or, in the case of stories dealing with environmental protection and immigration aspects, were completely absent from the news coverage of the two newspapers (at least as the main type of issue that issue discussed in the story). From these categories, only two of them, Society, Religion, and Culture and Institutional Design received some visibility in both newspapers. Nevertheless, the proportion of articles that discussed issues related to those two categories was much lower than the proportion of articles focused on economic or finance aspects.

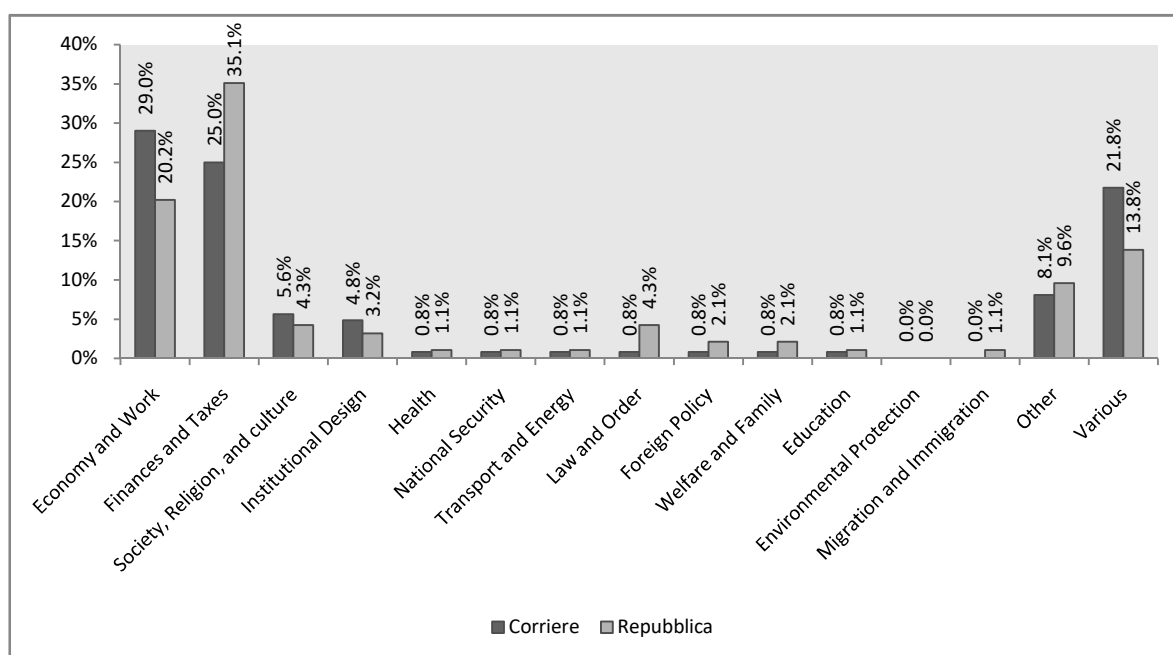


Figure 23 - Nature of the political issues present in the news coverage of the 2013 Italian elections.

Regarding the sub-frames of Strategy present in the campaign (Figure 24), the majority of the stories focused on the parties' strategies to gain advantage in the election or the way they were conducting the campaigns (37.95% in the Corriere and 46.1% in the Repubblica). In this regard, the journalists often discussed how aspects such as football (e.g. Berlusconi's football team buying the Italian player Mario Balotelli) or the Pope's resignation were, or could be, strategically used by the political parties to gain advantage in the election.

Comparatively, a smaller, but still considerable, number of stories dealt extensively with the parties' position in opinion polls or the consequences of the electoral results (25.3% of *Corriere* and 27.2%). The fact that the news media were not allowed, by the Italian electoral law, to publish any poll during the two weeks before election day might have lowered the number of news dealing extensively with the horse-race aspects of the campaign. In fact, a large proportion of the Horse-Race sub-frame stories dealt with the possible outcomes of the election in terms of governing negotiations. This fact is reinforced by the low number of opinion polls that were included in the news. In the case of the *Corriere* only 2.6% of the articles analyzed included opinion polls while in the *La Repubblica* this figure was even lower (1.2%). Opinion polls were, nevertheless, still published on the Internet during the last weeks of the campaign being most of the time, originally disguised as, literally, horse-races or even Cardinals' conclave⁴⁵. Finally, regarding the Horse-Race sub-frame, also the Pope's resignation had some influence on the salience of this particular aspect in the news coverage of the campaign, with the journalists on several occasions speculating the impact of the Pope's decision on the electoral race (e.g. which candidates or parties could potentially benefit from it the most).

Stories dealing extensively with turnout aspects (e.g. parties asking people to vote for them, or the participation in the election in general) were uncommon in the coverage made by *Corriere*, being dealt extensively in only 3.6% of this newspaper's items. In contrast, the number of articles dealing with this aspect in *La Repubblica* was considerably higher (10.5%). Overall, the majority of the news articles, about the 2013 Italian election, which were framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race, focused on the way the different parties were conducting their campaigns (i.e. where the candidates had been and what the different campaign events had looked like).

⁴⁵ "Conclave" e "cavalli", così il web aggira il divieto, *Corriere della Sera* (17/02/13).

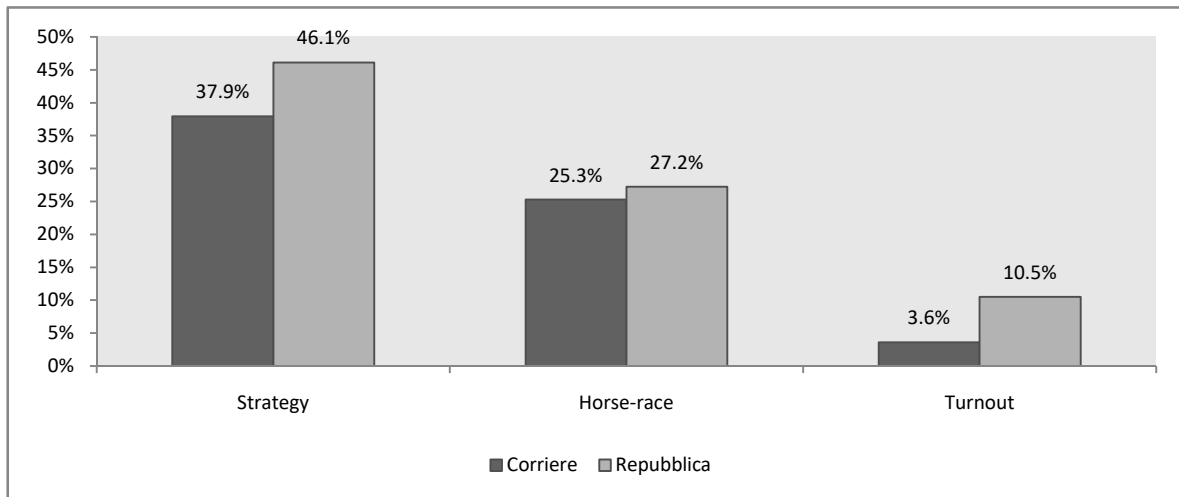


Figure 24 – Sub-frames of Strategy present in the news coverage of the 2013 Italian elections.

As we saw before, the Conflict Frame was also the second most salient frame used by the journalists to report the election. However, compared to what we observed in the U.S. case, the attacks reported in the news coverage of the Italian elections were of a completely different nature. While in the U.S. news media, the attacks shown in the news articles were mostly focused on the candidates' issues, in the Italian case, the type of conflict most frequently reported was related to the candidates' personal traits or values. About 74% of the attacks shown in the two Italian newspapers were focused on the personal characteristics and the values of the different campaign actors (Figure 25). Contrarily, only 14% of the attacks shown in both newspapers were connected to the candidates' positions on certain political issues. There were however some cases where the attacks on personal traits and values were indirectly connected to some political issues. A good example was when some candidates accused Berlusconi of adopting clientelistic campaign techniques or blackmailing the electorate with campaign pledges.

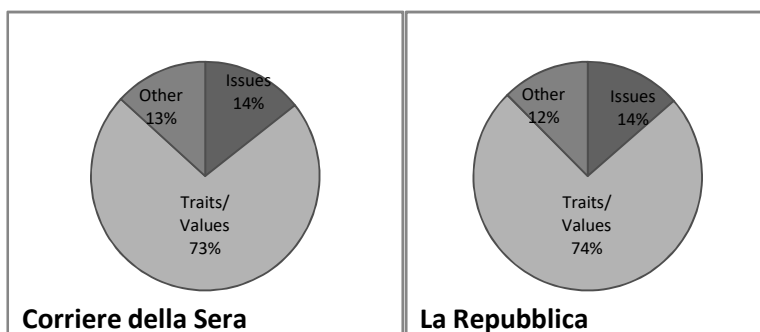


Figure 25 - Type of conflict present in the news coverage of the 2013 Italian elections.

Regarding the journalistic style in the Italian news coverage of the election, the majority of the stories presented in the press were descriptive (72.1% in *Corriere* and 63.8% in *Repubblica*). Compared to the American ones, the Italian journalists tried on fewer occasions to interpret and evaluate the campaign events in their news articles. Additionally, in the *Corriere della Sera*, only 11.2% of the pieces presented a critical stance or question of the journalists towards the political actors. However, in the newspaper *La Repubblica*, where the interpretative style was also higher, the number of stories showing critical statements or judgments towards politicians was almost two times higher than in *Corriere*, being present in 21.1% of *La Repubblica* articles.

Overall, the Italian news coverage of the Italian elections in 2013 presented the same *media logic* aspects that we observed in the U.S. case. The two most salient frames were the Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames, while very few stories dealt extensively with substantive political issues (and an even considerably lower proportion of news articles presented it as the main/first aspect of the story). In addition to this, also stories dealing with scandals connected to politicians were prominent to some extent in the Italian press. Regarding the types of issue categories, the nature of issues that were shown in the news coverage of these two newspapers was not very diversified. While aspects related to Economy or Finances were extremely salient in the press, the remaining issue categories received very little attention from the journalists, and in some cases were even absent from the news coverage of the elections. This low salience of political issues, and the high salience of conflict, might however reflect the campaigns made by the Italian political parties. According to the then-Italian President, Giorgio Napolitano, the 2013 Italian campaign was more about conflict and attacks and less about the discussion of ideas⁴⁶. In the next sections we analyze how the four main parties in this election framed their campaigns when communicating directly to the voters through different social media.

5.2 – *Scelta Civica's campaign on the SNS.*

The SC was the political party founded by the incumbent prime-minister Mario Monti to compete in the 2013 Italian elections. After the premature end of Berlusconi's government in late 2011, Monti was asked to head a "salvation" government that could carry out adequate

⁴⁶ Napolitano ai partiti: dopo le urne tornate a occuparvi dei problemi, *Corriere della Sera* (20/02/13).

reforms to deal with the Italian economic and financial crisis. Through the implementation of several austerity measures, Monti's government avoided the collapse of the Italian economy and, different from Ireland, Greece and Portugal, avoided as well the need for an international bailout program for Italy. This situation gave Monti some recognition and support from the international community (for example, one of the endorsements of SC during the campaign, which the party advertised on its Facebook account, came from the White House through the NSC spokesperson, Caitlin Hayden) but, at the same time, slowly undermined and reduced his government's popularity among the Italian electorate. As a result of this, the main campaign message of Monti and his party in the 2013 election was that a sense of responsibility forced SC to run in this election, in order to guarantee that all sacrifices made by Italian citizens would not be wasted. As we will see, the austerity imposed by Monti's government would become a central aspect in the campaign of all parties. The electoral opponents of SC, particularly Berlusconi's PdL, campaigned on the idea that some of those austerity measures had been too tough on Italian citizens and had seriously aggravated the economic situation of the Italian families.

The SC was, perhaps, the party that performed poorly in the 2013 Italian election. While, four weeks before election day, the polls showed around 18% of vote intention in this party, this figure steadily decreased throughout the campaign. In the end, SC received only 8.3% of popular vote. Several aspects during the campaign, including the fact that Monti was the preferable target for the attacks of the main candidates in this election, might have contributed to the weak performance of SC in the 2013 Italian general elections.

As already mentioned in the literature review, even though television remained, according to the press⁴⁷, the main campaign channel for parties and citizens, the 2013 election, where political rallies lost importance in the campaigns of a large number of parties⁴⁸, has been described as the "Twitter Italian general election" (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2013, p.2). This was an impression shared not only by academics but also by the Italian journalists. According to the Italian press, the fact that the main protagonists in the election were well over their sixties did not deter them, and their parties, from making extensive use of social media during the last weeks of the campaign⁴⁹. According to that news article, this was

⁴⁷ Cento ore di parole in una settimana così i politici hanno invaso il video, *La Repubblica* (31/02/13); E per sei Italiani su dieci è la tv a guidare il voto, *La Repubblica* (30/01/13); Campagna elettorale ostaggio della tv l'ultima replica dell'Irreality Show, *La Repubblica* (11/02/13).

⁴⁸ Comizi addio? Spostano voti ma solo fino al '48, *Corriere della Sera* (29/01/13).

⁴⁹ Boom di Twitter e Facebook due messaggi ogni second così i politici diventano social, *La Repubblica* (06/02/13).

the first election where the Italian parties and candidates opened the both "innovative and dangerous" door of social media, generating instantaneous campaigns where the public immediately and continuously reacts to the parties' and candidates' statements. Even though Monti and his Scelta Civica were later adopters of Twitter compared to the other Italian candidates/parties, the SC ended up making extensive use of Twitter during the last four weeks before election day. From the parties analyzed, the SC was the second, after PdL, most active party on Twitter. As far as innovative social media campaign goes, Monti was also the first Italian candidate to publish videos through Vine's social network⁵⁰.

Regarding the media frames used by SC on social media, the results show that this party mostly framed its campaign in terms of substantive political issues. As the Figure 26 shows, the Issues Frame was the most salient aspect in all of the three SNS. This frame was more salient on YouTube. About 58% of the videos in this SNS dealt extensively with substantive political issues. In the case of Twitter and Facebook, the Issues Frame was present, respectively, in 51.1% and 44.5% of the items analyzed. Overall, more than half of the social media items of SC dealt with substantive political issues. Furthermore, on some occasions, this party also offered concrete figures of how much some of its policy measures (e.g. reduction of the property tax) would cost and from where that money would come, in order to frame the party's policy pledges as credible, sustainable and coherent.

The second most salient aspect in the online campaign of Scelta Civica was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. This frame was more frequently used in the Facebook campaign, with 44% of the messages dealing with this aspect. On this platform, both Strategy/Horse-Race and Issues Frame had identical salience in this particular social media. Comparatively, it was on Twitter that this aspect was less frequently included. Only 31% of the Twitter posts dealt with strategy and horse-race aspects. In the case of YouTube, slightly more than 37% of the videos dealt extensively with Strategy/Horse-Race aspects.

Regarding the Conflict Frame, its salience was relatively low in the campaign of this party, particularly in the Twitter and Facebook messages. These results contradict the idea, expressed by journalists and party opponent's, that the SC conducted a negative campaign, particularly after the party have hired David Axelrod, a former campaign advisor of Clinton and Obama⁵¹. In the case of YouTube, where the salience of the Conflict Frame was higher, the proportion of videos that included this campaign aspect (30.2%) was roughly two times

⁵⁰ Sul web arrivano i "micrometraggi", *Corriere della Sera* (27/01/13)

⁵¹ Casini il «mediatore»: dialogo con Bersani per siglare l'armistizio, *Corriere della Sera* (28/01/13). Il successo che temo è quello di Grillo, *Corriere della Sera* (22/02/13).

greater than the other two SNS. It was on Twitter that attacks towards other political actors were less frequent, being the Conflict Frame observed in less than 15% of the Twitter items analyzed. Overall, we can say that SC not only paid particular attention, in its online campaign, to convey and discuss political issues, but also avoided, to some extent, criticizing and attacking its opponents. In fact, the majority of the occasions that this party addressed the opponents was to challenge them to a televised debate. Furthermore, the online messages of this party, through its leader, not only criticized the negative campaign of its opponents, and their "recurrent attacks to attract attentions", but also, on one occasion, cleared one of its opponents, Bersani, from having any responsibility in the Monte dei Paschi scandal.

The remaining generic media frames were relatively less often included in the online campaign of this party. From those, the Personalization Frame was the fourth most salient aspect in the campaign of SC, which was slightly more salient in the YouTube campaign with 11.6% of the videos presenting it. This might have resulted from an attempt of this party to present Monti as an ordinary person to counteract the idea, promoted by some of Monti's opponents, that he was a distant bureaucrat from Brussels that could not understand and relate to ordinary Italian citizens. According to the Italian press, the fact that Monti was seen, by Italians, as a person more concerned about helping the banks rather than ordinary citizens, was indeed the main reason for this party to lose a large part of its electorate during the campaign⁵². Perhaps for this reason, several of social media messages of SC focused on Monti's recently adopted pet or showed him in very casual and family moments. This fact might as well explain the comparatively high salience of the Human-Interest Frame on Facebook, which was included in 7.5% of the messages analyzed.

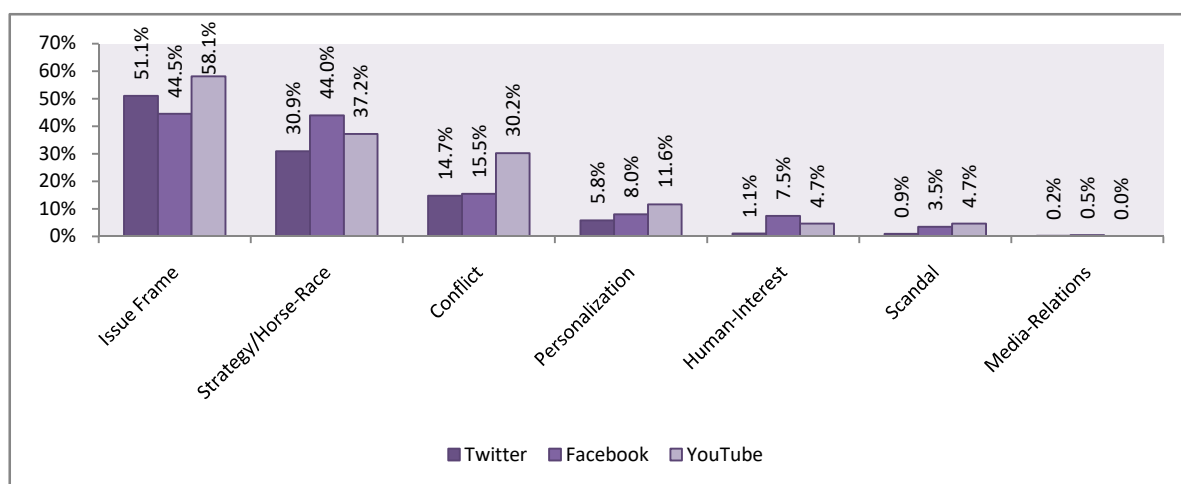


Figure 26 – Frames present in the SNS campaign of Scelta Civica.

⁵² Usare i numeri o «buttarsi» sulla Rete L'ultima scommessa degli spin doctor, *Corriere della Sera* (19/02/13).

When we look at the first frames used in the SNS (Figure 27) the picture remains essentially the same, confirming the salience that the Issues Frame had in the campaign of SC. The Issues Frame was the aspect more frequently conveyed, as the primary aspect of the messages, in Twitter and YouTube messages. On Twitter and YouTube, a total of 45.9% and 41.9% of the items analyzed, respectively, had substantive political issues as the first, and therefore most important, aspect conveyed in the messages. On Facebook, contrarily, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was more frequently the first aspect of Facebook posts. Nevertheless, on this platform, the proportion of posts primarily framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race (35.5%) was almost identical to the percentage of posts that primarily focused on substantive political issues (35%).

Regarding the Conflict Frame, this aspect remained more salient in the YouTube content (18.8%) compared to the other SNS. This result however reinforces the idea that the campaign of this party was not particularly negative. The SC mainly used social media to inform citizens about their positions certain political issues rather than to attack and challenge their electoral opponents.

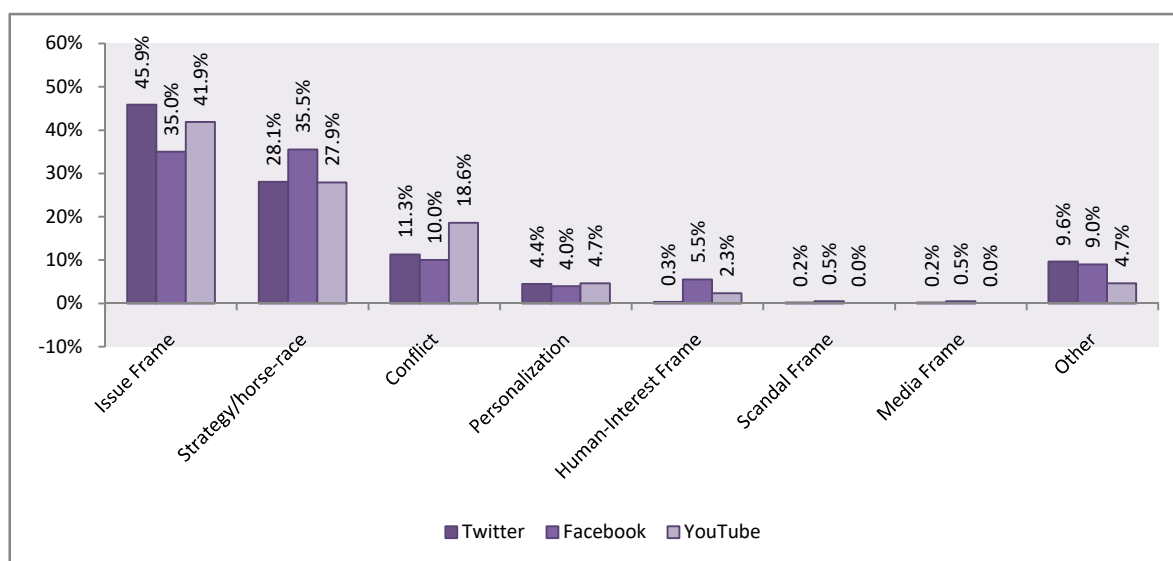


Figure 27 - First/Main frame present in the SNS campaign of Scelta Civica.

When we look at the nature of the issues discussed by this party, the SNS campaign dealt, at least on Twitter, with all the categories included in the analysis (Figure 28). Similarly to the news coverage of the election, the most salient issues in the online campaign of SC were, again, related to Economy and Work and Finances and Taxes. These two categories

were the most salient topics of issues in all of the SNS analyzed. In the case of Twitter, a total of 31.9% and 24.2% of the posts that included the Issues Frame, focused on Economy and Finances aspects. From the three SNS analyzed, the category of Finances and taxes was less salient on Facebook, being the main topic discussed in only 13.5% of the messages that dealt with political issues. Economy and Work aspects were less salient on YouTube but were nevertheless, the dominant topic in 24% of the videos that discussed substantive political issues. As previously mentioned, the tax reduction topic dominated the campaigns of the majority of the Italian parties, and SC was not an exception. Additionally, two other issues (Welfare and Family and Society, Religion and Culture) were also relatively salient in the online campaign of SC. However, this party also refrained, perhaps owing to some strategic considerations, from having an official position on some of the more controversial issues of the time, such it was the same sex marriage.

Differently, the issues that were absent on Facebook and YouTube, and partially neglected on Twitter, were those concerning Migration and Immigration, National Security and Transport and Energy. These were also topics, as we saw, that received very limited attention from the Italian journalists. Even though, overall, the salience of the remaining categories was relatively low, political issues related to education were relatively salient in the YouTube campaign of SC. From the videos that dealt extensively with political issues, education was the main category in 8% of them.

Finally, the results also indicate an important difference between Twitter and Facebook regarding the issues that were discussed in these two social media. While Twitter dealt mainly with one single type of issue per post (which is normal considering the micro-blog characteristics of this platform, if no additional content is included in the post), on Facebook, 32.6% of the posts included more than one category of political issues. This suggests that different social media were used, by this party, for different purposes. While Twitter was used to give the electorate some glimpses of the different pledges of the party, Facebook was used to convey more broad and thorough discussions of different substantive political issues.

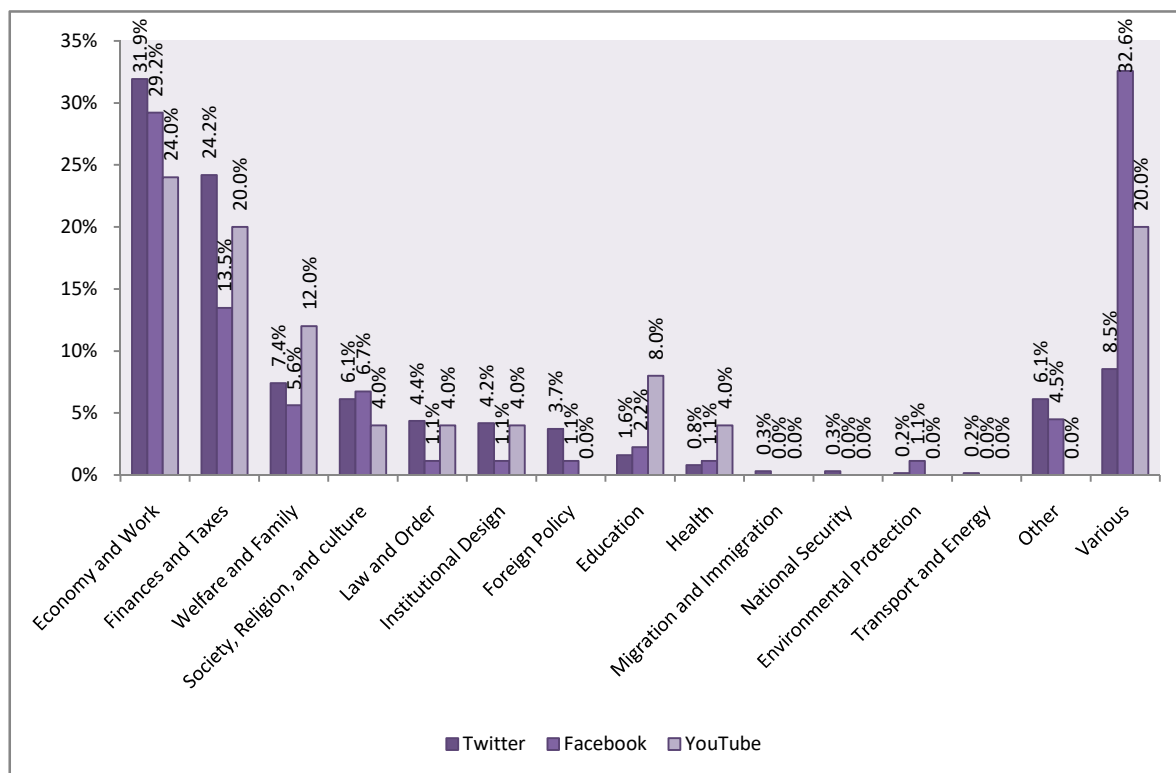


Figure 28 - Type of issues present in the SNS campaign of Scelta Civica.

Regarding the sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race used in the online campaign of SC, the most salient aspects related to parties' strategies and the way the campaign was being conducted (Figure 29). Most of the posts that included this sub-frame were related to the self-declared availability and the will of Monti to participate in televised debates with the leaders of the two main candidates (PdL and PD). The Horse-Race aspects had, on the other hand, a much lower salience, being dealt with extensively in only 5.77% of the Twitter posts, 4.65% in the case of YouTube, and in an even lower percentage in the case of Facebook (1%). The posts dealing with fundraising aspects were absent on all platforms. From all the Italian parties included in the analysis, only the M5S, as we will see, had some content on the SNS related to this aspect. As for the remaining sub-frames (Turnout, Endorsement, Experiencing and Support) their saliency was relatively low in comparison to the Strategy sub-frame. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of YouTube videos (11.6%) included messages about the importance of participating in the election and voting for the party. With respect to endorsements, it is interesting that, even though Monti criticized Berlusconi for using football for electoral reasons, this party was keen to share on both Twitter and Facebook the endorsement received by Buffon, the goalkeeper of the Italian football national team.

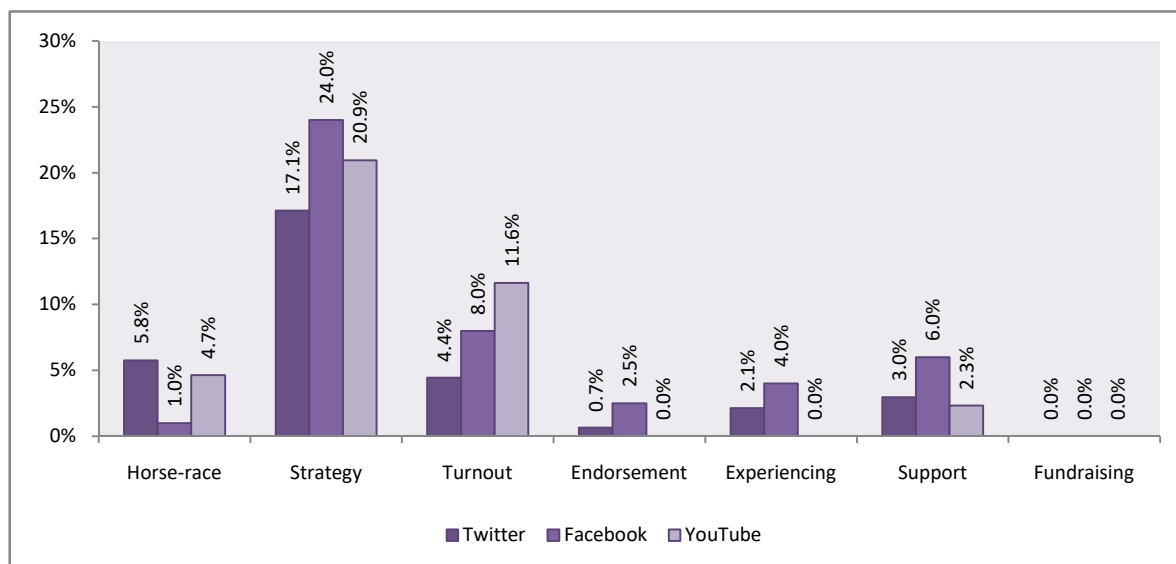


Figure 29 - Strategy sub-frames in the SNS campaign of Scelta Civica.

With respect to the type of conflict, the nature of the attacks most frequent in this party's campaign was not the same for all three SNS (Figure 30). On Twitter the attacks shown were mainly addressed to the other parties' issues (41%) instead of their personal traits or values (30%). This might also relate to the higher salience that the Issues Frame had on this particular SNS. On the other hand, the dominant type of attack on Facebook and YouTube was the one directed at the opponent's personal traits and values (48% and 38% respectively) while attacks on the opponents' issues amounted only to 23% and 31% of the attacks shown, respectively, on Facebook and YouTube. In addition to this, on all three platforms there was also a considerable amount of attacks that were neither clearly related to political issues nor the opponents' personal traits or values. Overall, we cannot say that there was a particular type of conflict that dominated the online campaign of SC.

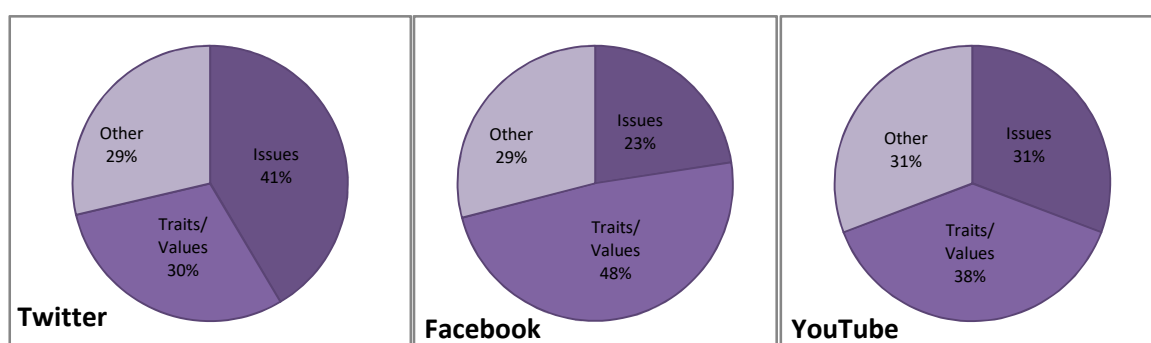


Figure 30 – Type of conflict in the SNS campaign of Scelta Civica.

Finally, regarding the additional content that SC included on the SNS, there was a clear difference on how these two platforms were used in the campaign (Figure 31). In the

case of Twitter, the majority of posts were simply used to quote the statements of the main candidates. A total of 78.3% of Twitter posts did not include any additional content. When extra content was included on Twitter it was, most of the time, simply a picture (9.1%). Non-journalistic articles (such as articles from the party's website) were included in 6.5% of posts and 5.1% of the Twitter messages also had a video. On the other hand, on Facebook, almost all posts (96%) included some sort of additional content in the messages. In the majority of cases, the additional content was a non-journalistic article (41.2%) or a single image (35.5%). Only 16% of Facebook posts included a video.

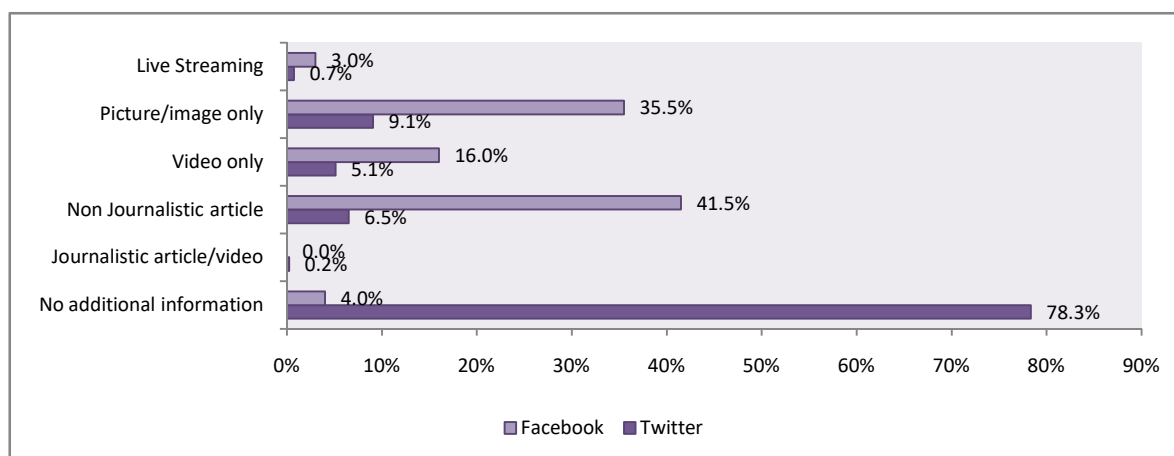


Figure 31 - Additional information included in the SNS campaign of Scelta Civica.

5.3 – Partito democratico's campaign on the SNS.

The Democratic Party (PD) and its center-left coalition were the winners of the 2013 Italian election, even though their result was still short of an absolute majority in the Italian senate. At the beginning of the campaign, the opinion polls showed a clear advantage of PD over their main opponents. However this advantage in voting intention started to decrease when, one month before the election, a financial scandal in Monte dei Paschi di Siena, which also involved some political figures of the party, became public. The decline of voting intention for PD and the growth of PdL, and also the M5S, in the polls made difficult to anticipate which coalition (center-left or center-right) would win the election. Indeed, in its online campaign, the PD identified these two parties, accusing them of being two distinct versions of populism, as their main electoral opponents.

Regarding online campaigning, the use of social media was also an important component in the campaign of this party (in addition to more traditional methods such as direct contact in the streets/rallies and even phone calls), particularly in the last days before

election day. Clear evidence of this was when the party organized a workshop in Rome that gathered volunteers experienced in social media to help in the "final sprint" of PD in this campaign. Overall, this party tried to distance itself from the televised campaigns, and often declared instead its commitment to have a more interactive campaign that is closer to the citizens. In fact, for PD the Internet was not only an important campaign tool but it was also an important component of its political agenda. The party campaigned, especially through Matteo Renzi, on the use of new technologies for social and economic development. The focus on this agenda was also, according to Renzi himself⁵³, the best strategy to deal with the success and growth of Grillo's M5S.

Regarding the frames used by PD in its SNS campaign, there were considerable differences between the three online platforms analyzed (Figure 32). While on Facebook and YouTube the most salient aspect was the Issues Frame (56% and 47.7% respectively), in the case of Twitter the aspects related to the parties' strategies and horse-race were most salient, being included in 51.69% of posts on this platform. Only 36.7% of Twitter messages included the Issues Frame. Nevertheless, contrary to what we observed for the press, the communication and discussion of substantive political issues was a priority for this party's campaign, particularly in its Facebook campaign. The proportion of messages that included the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was lowest on Facebook (39%) while on YouTube 47.2% of the videos dealt extensively with this aspect.

The Conflict Frame was more salient on Facebook compared to the other two platforms. This aspect was shown in 43% of Facebook posts. In fact, on Facebook, the Conflict Frame was more frequently conveyed than aspects related to Strategy/Horse-Race. On the other two SNS, the salience of Conflict Frame was relatively low (28.5% on Twitter and 25.6% on YouTube), especially considering that almost 60% of the news articles from *La Repubblica* included this aspect. Overall, even though the Issues Frame was the most salient aspect on Facebook posts of PD, the fact that the Conflict Frame was also present in a considerable amount of those messages made the online campaign of this party, in a way, less informative to the electorate. Nevertheless, contrary to what we saw for the press, the communication and discussion of substantive political issues was still a major priority in the online campaign of PD.

The remaining aspects had, overall, relatively low salience in the campaign of this party. The Personalization Frame was the fourth most salient aspect in the Twitter and

⁵³ Renzi: tutti in campo per far vincere Bersani, *L'Unità* (20/02/13).

Facebook campaigns. This frame was present in 6.6% of the Twitter posts and 7% of the Facebook messages. The majority of these messages dealt, however, with personal characteristics and private aspects of PD's opponents, rather than its leader, Bersani. On the YouTube, in contrast, the fourth most salient aspect was the Human-Interest Frame, which was included in 6% of YouTube videos. Perhaps as a consequence of this party's involvement in the Monte dei Paschi affair, the salience of the Scandal Frame was also low in the social media campaign of PD, despite the fact that, as we saw, this campaign was embroiled in all sorts of political scandals.

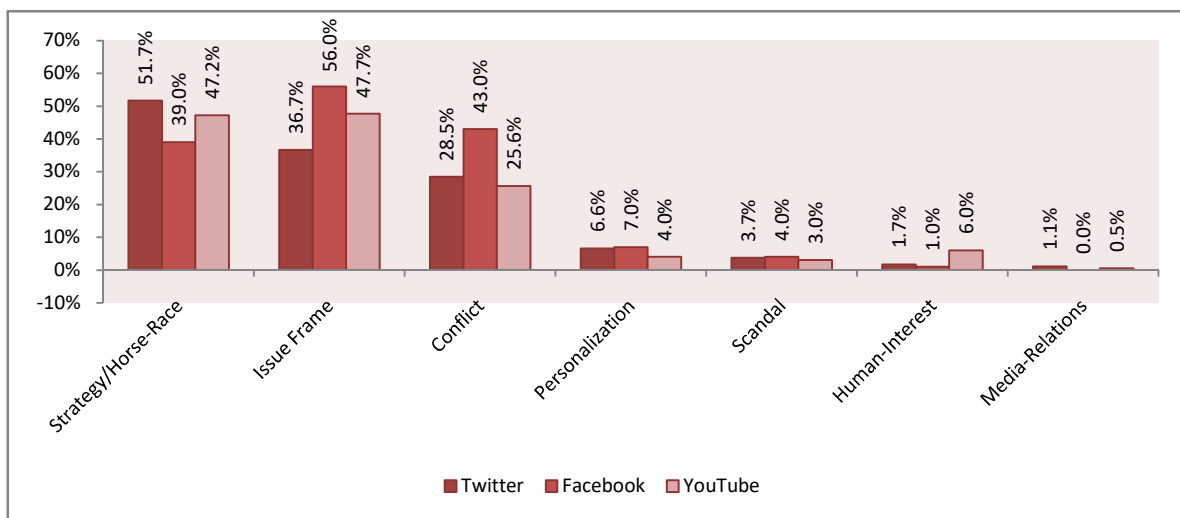


Figure 32 - Frames present in the SNS campaign of Partito Democratico.

When we look at the first frames used in the online campaign the picture remains almost unchanged (Figure 33). The Issues Frame continues to be the most salient aspect in the Facebook messages. However, on YouTube, the Strategy/Horse-Race aspects become more prominent than the discussion of substantive political issues. Nevertheless, the Issues Frame was still the primary aspect discussed in 35.7% of the YouTube videos. It was, in fact, on YouTube that the proportion of content that had the Issues Frame as the first aspect of the message was higher. While on Facebook, the Issues Frame was the primary aspect in 34% of the items analyzed, in the case of Twitter, only 25.7% of the posts focused primarily on this aspect. These results, overall, reinforce the idea that this party prioritized the discussion and conveyance of political issues in its online campaign.

It is also interesting to highlight the fact that the salience of the Conflict Frame becomes very low, particularly on Twitter and YouTube, when we look at the first frames conveyed in the messages. These results suggest that, in general, attacking the opponent was not the main purpose of the messages published by this party on the SNS. A considerable

number of the SNS items that included conflict were primarily focused on either Strategy/Horse-Race aspects or substantive political issues. The remaining four media frames were the first aspect discussed in the online content published by PD on only very few occasions.

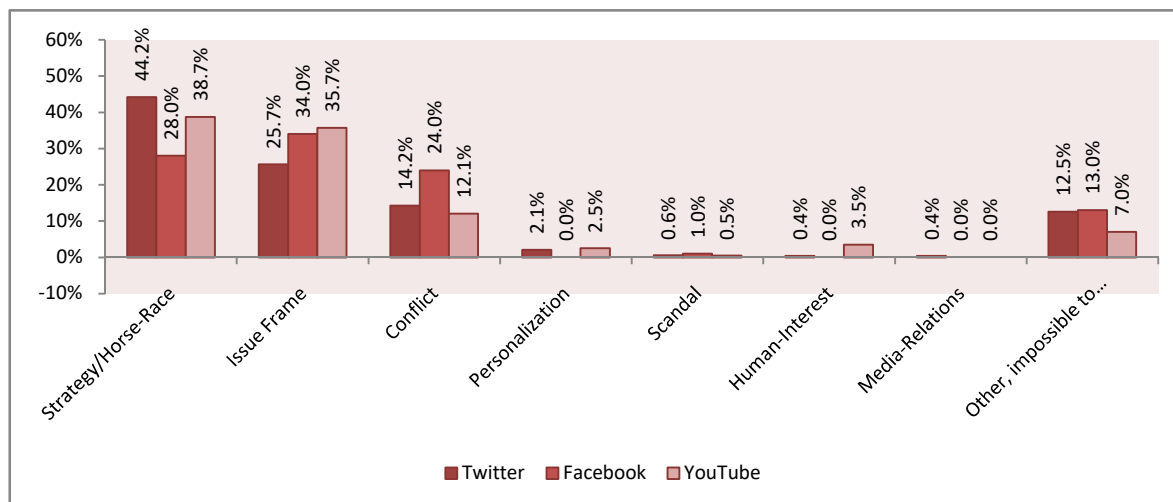


Figure 33 - First/Main frames present in the SNS campaign of Partito Democratico.

Regarding the nature of the issues that were discussed in the SNS campaign of PD, the most salient categories on both platforms were again the Economy and Work and the Finances and Taxes (Figure 34). The third most salient category on Twitter, being present in 11.7% of the posts that included issues, was Foreign Policy (mostly statements related to European Integration that were included in this category). However, the saliency of this category was considerably higher on Twitter in comparison to the other two social media. On Facebook and YouTube, from all the posts and videos that dealt extensively with political issues, only 1.7% and 1.1%, respectively, dealt in an extensive way with foreign policy issues.

The remaining categories (with the exception of Environmental Protection, Migration and Immigration, Health and National Security) were all at some point discussed on all of the three SNS. Issues related to Education were particularly salient in the Facebook campaign of the PD where 10.7% of the posts, that included the Issues Frame, focused on this topic. The two topics of Environmental Protection and Immigration were only discussed in the YouTube campaign while, conversely, only the Twitter and Facebook had some content dealing with Health issues. Finally, the topic that received the lowest salience in the online campaign of PD was National Security, being only discussed in only one Twitter message.

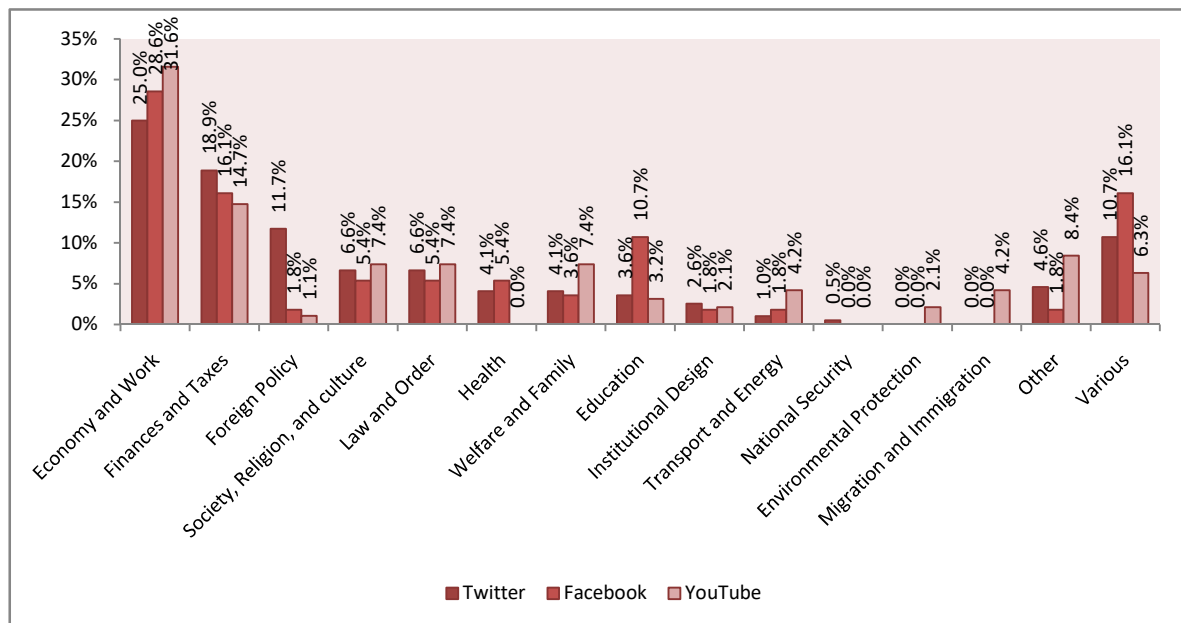


Figure 34 - Nature of the issues present in the SNS campaign of Partito Democratico.

With respect to the sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race, similarly to what we observed in the online campaign of SC, the most salient aspects in the online campaign of PD related to the parties' strategies and the way this party was conducting its campaign. The Strategy sub-frame was present in 33.9% of the Twitter posts, 29% on Facebook and 32.2% on YouTube (Figure 35). A relatively small amount of posts dealt with horse-race aspects of the campaign (10.7% on Twitter, 13% on Facebook and only 8% on YouTube). Nevertheless, the Horse-Race sub-frame was, after Strategy, the second most salient aspect on all of the three SNS.

The Turnout and Endorsement sub-frames were more salient in the YouTube campaign of PD. On this platform, about 5.5% of the videos dealt with vote appeals and 7.5% dealt with endorsements from celebrities or public figures. Against this backdrop, the Experiencing the Campaign sub-frame was more frequently included in the Twitter campaign. While these opportunities to experience online the campaign (usually through long videos or live streaming of the campaign rallies/events) were present in 7.5% of the Twitter posts, only 1% of the Facebook content had this particular aspect. All three SNS had a small proportion of content focusing on opportunities and appeals to help and support the campaign. Finally, none of the social media analyzed had content dealing with fundraising and opportunities to contribute to the campaign. Again, the salience, or presence, of those messages strongly depends on the countries' electoral law and, to some extent, on the type of party.

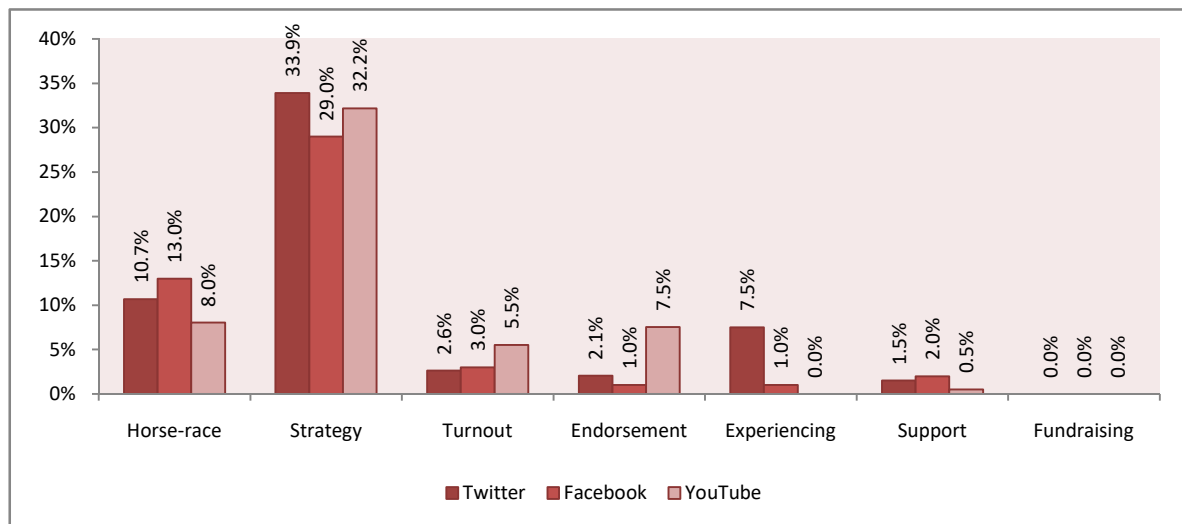


Figure 35 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in the SNS campaign of Partito Democratico.

Regarding the type of conflict shown in the online campaign of PD, similarly to what we saw in traditional media, the candidates' attacks were mainly directed at their opponents' personal traits and values. The proportion of attacks aimed at personal traits and values was higher in all three social media (Figure 36). The salience of this type of conflict was particularly high in the case of YouTube. About 78% of the attacks shown in the YouTube videos of PD were aimed at the opponents' personal traits or values. On the other two SNS, the proportion of attacks aimed at personal traits and values was 51%, on Twitter and 53% on Facebook.

Surprisingly, even though this party identified the PdL and M5S as its main electoral opponents, the incumbent Italian prime minister, Mario Monti, was also a frequent target of PD's online messages. The PD criticized Monti, among other things, for having few women in his party lists, for conducting a negative campaign⁵⁴ or even for paying too much attention to his newly adopted dog during the campaign. Berlusconi was mostly criticized for his control over the traditional media or some statements were considered offensive or opportunistic. Grillo, on the other hand, was mainly criticized by his populist discourse and for avoiding the journalists during the campaign. Overall, the majority of attacks from PD focused on the values and personal traits of their opponents rather than concrete political issues and policies.

Similar to SC, PD also criticized the opponents for not reaching any agreement regarding the format for the televised debates. Even though, according to the press, the television remained the main campaign arena, this election was marked by the absence of

⁵⁴ The PD, similarly to other parties, also linked the negative campaign style of SC to its American campaign advisor.

televised debates between the main candidates. While Bersani was only willing to participate in a debate with all of the six main electoral candidates, Monti and Berlusconi were only willing to accept debates with three (PD, SC and PdL) and two candidates (PD and PdL), respectively.

The difference between the two types of attack (issues and traits/values) was less marked in the case of Facebook. On this platform 40% of the attacks also targeted the opponents' political issues. To this result might have contributed, as we saw, the fact that Facebook had the highest salience of the Issues Frame of the three SNS, suggesting that, on Facebook, the PD not only tried to convey its position on certain issues but also to criticize the issues agenda of its opponents. Finally, only 28% of the attacks presented in the Twitter campaign focused on the opponents' issues. However, a considerable amount of conflict shown on this platform (21%) could not be coded as neither issues nor traits/values attacks. YouTube had the lowest percentage of attacks focused on political issues. On this platform, only 20% of the conflict aspect shown targeted the opponents' policy preferences and pledges.

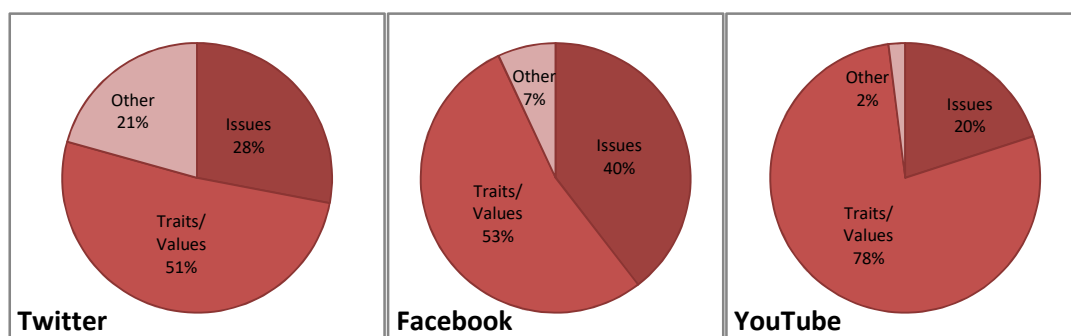


Figure 36 - Type of conflict present in the SNS campaign of Partito Democratico.

Finally, the analysis of the additional information in the Facebook and Twitter posts of this party also suggests that these two SNS were used differently or for different purposes (Figure 37). The majority of the messages on Twitter (53.8%) did not include any additional information. The most interesting aspect is, however, the fact that when the PD included some extra content in their Twitter posts, it was most of the time a journalistic article. In fact, about 22.5% of the Twitter posts included a link to an article from the Italian press. From all the online campaigns analyzed in this dissertation, it was the social media campaign of PD, more concretely its campaign on Twitter, which advertised the most content that originally came from the traditional media. These articles were however, most of the time, opinion articles from party supporters rather than journalistic news pieces. In addition to this, the vast majority of these articles came from one particular Italian newspaper, La Repubblica. The

remaining Twitter posts included non-journalistic articles (14.6%), pictures (4.5%), video messages (4.1%) or, on some very few occasions, a live streaming videos of the campaign (0.6%).

In the case of Facebook, which differed from Twitter, the vast majority of the online items (95%) included some sort of additional content to the text. None of the Facebook content, however, included content originally from the traditional media. Instead, the majority of the Facebook messages (76%) included non-journalistic articles, mostly articles from the official website of the party. The remaining Facebook messages either included simply a picture/image, on 9% of the occasions, or simply video, a type of content that was included in exactly 10% of the Facebook posts.

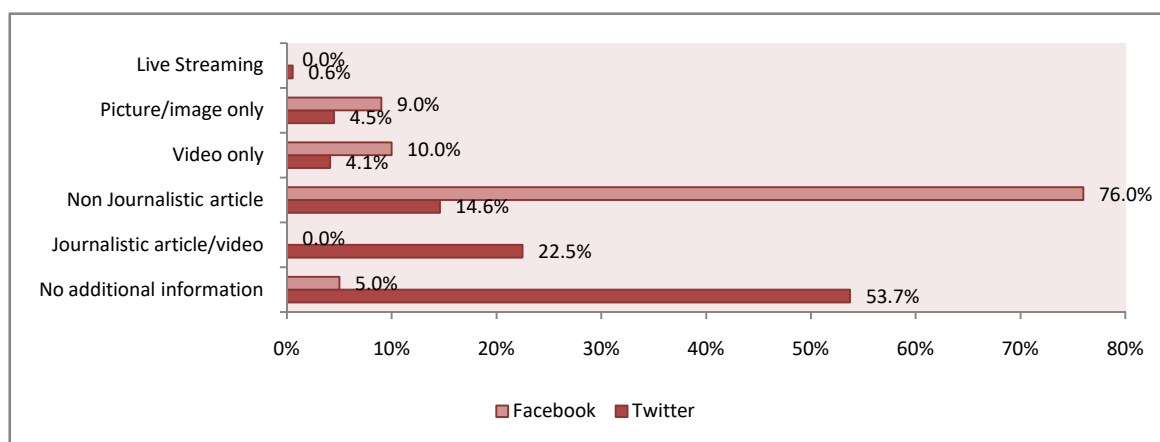


Figure 37 - Additional information present in the SNS campaign of Partito Democratico.

5.4 - *Popolo della Libertà's campaign on the SNS.*

After being behind in the opinion polls by 10 percentage points one month before election day, in the end, Silvio Berlusconi's party and the center-right coalition failed to win the majority of seats in the Chamber of Deputies by only 0.4% of the popular vote. There were several aspects that apparently contributed to this surprising electoral upturn. Some of these aspects were the financial scandal in the oldest Italian bank (Monte dei Paschi di Siena) that negatively affected the PD, the post-election ambiguity of the center-coalition, and, to a large extent, the creative pledges/stunts made by Berlusconi⁵⁵ throughout the campaign. The most important aspect, which would eventually end up dominating a large part of the discussion in this election, was his "Proposta Shock" to not only abolish a property tax on family houses but to also give back to the citizens the money they spent with that tax in the previous year. A

⁵⁵ L'ex premier spera di guadagnare un 2% E i sondaggisti: la mossa lo aiuta, *Corriere della Sera* (04/02/13).

proposal that greatly contributed to the large salience that the issues' category of Finances and Taxes had in the 2013 Italian general election, while also making Berlusconi the most mentioned candidate on the Internet⁵⁶. However, the PdL's use of the Internet was another aspect that might have contributed to the relatively successful campaign of this party.

Even though the previous electoral success of Berlusconi has been partially attributed to his use and control of television, as well as the fact that Berlusconi was the only Italian main candidate without a Twitter account, in 2013 the PdL conducted, together with M5S, one of the most innovative online campaigns. Similar to Howard Dean's campaign, PdL used an online platform with more than 250 thousand users to, among other things, test and improve the proposals of the party⁵⁷. In other words, the PdL's campaign material was elaborated on and improved online, with contributions of thousands of volunteers, before it was sent to a larger online and offline audience. With respect to the social media, this party mostly focused on Facebook rather than Twitter, which was perceived as a more elitist, and therefore less useful, platform. The successful use of Facebook by PdL was also acknowledged by the journalists, which highlighted the capacity of this party to generate large levels of interaction and interest over the content published on this platform⁵⁸. Despite not being the social media prioritized by PdL, Twitter was nevertheless still used extensively by this party. From the four Italian parties analyzed, PdL, with its 2.132 tweets made in the last four weeks before election day, was the party that sent out the largest number of posts on that platform.

Regarding the salience of the different media frames in the SNS campaign of PdL, the most salient aspect in the content of Twitter was the Issues Frame (See Figure 38). This aspect was shown in 48.83% of the posts of this platform. The other two most salient aspects in the Twitter campaign of this party were the Conflict and the Strategy/Horse-Race Frames, which were included, respectively, in 30.53% and 25% of the posts. In a similar way, also the Issues Frame was the most salient aspect in YouTube videos (75%), followed by the Conflict Frame (39.3%) and the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, which appeared in only 14.3% of the videos.

However, when we look Facebook, the picture considerably changes. The most salient aspect in the Facebook campaign of PdL was the Conflict Frame, which was present in more than 70% of the stories. In contrast, both Issues and the Strategy/Horse-Race Frames had

⁵⁶ Boom del Cavaliere sul web, *Corriere della Sera* (05/02/13).

⁵⁷ Niente guru e 2mila volontari "virali" la campagna alla Blair del Cavaliere, *La Repubblica* (06/02/13).

⁵⁸ E i "cinguetti", *La Repubblica* (06/02/13).

similar salience on this SNS, with these frames present in slightly less the 40% of the messages. This resulted from the fact that PdL's campaign on Facebook, unlike its Twitter campaign, relied extensively on articles published by its candidates on the party's official website. The vast majority of these articles included attacks aimed at both Italian and international actors. Overall, we can say that the social media campaign of this party had two main priorities. The first priority was to discuss and convey substantive political issues, particularly through YouTube videos. The second was to attack and criticize the opponents, which was made especially in the content shared through Facebook.

The Strategy/Horse-Race was the third most salient aspect in the social media campaign of PdL. From the three SNS analyzed, this frame was more frequently included in the Facebook content (39.9%). However, this aspect was less often a central aspect of the messages on YouTube. Only 14.3% of the YouTube videos included the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. On Twitter, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was included in 25% of the posts. Compared to the other three Italian parties analyzed in this chapter, the online campaign of PdL had the lowest salience of aspects related to Strategy/Horse-Race.

The remaining media frames in general had relatively low salience in the social media campaign of PdL. The Personalization Frame was more salient on Twitter, compared to the other two platforms. A total of 8% of the Twitter messages dealt with personal and private aspects of the candidates. On Facebook, more than 8% of the items dealt with political scandals. These Facebook posts mainly related to the alleged responsibility of PD for the Monte dei Paschi crisis. Finally, a small amount of online content also included the Media-Relations Frame. Interestingly, despite Berlusconi's standing as a media mogul, PdL and its leader were among the actors in this campaign more critical of the traditional media and journalists, including foreign ones.

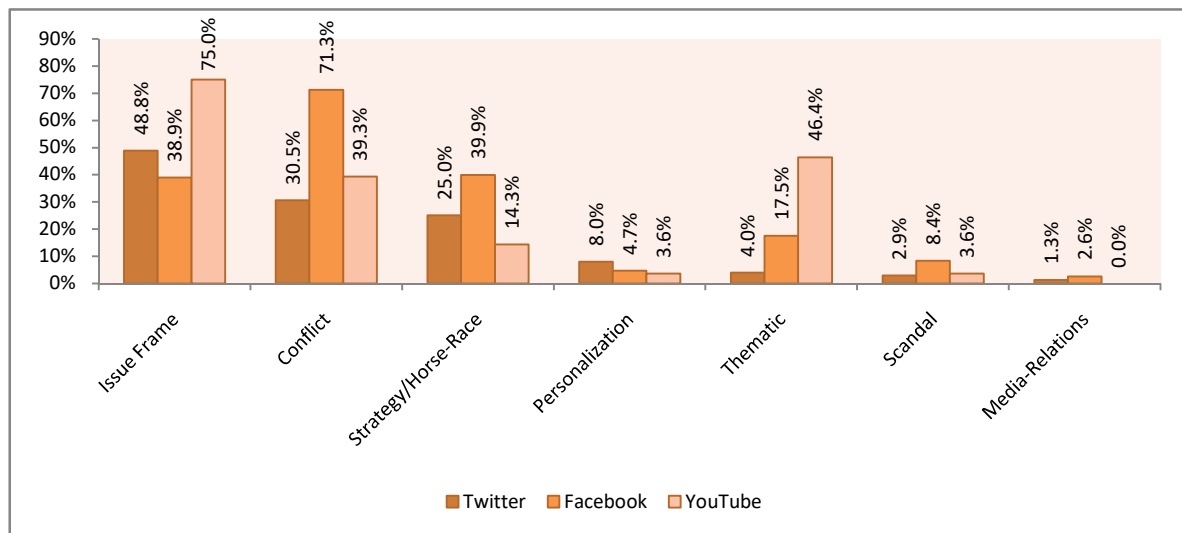


Figure 38 - Frames present in the SNS campaign of PdL.

When we look at which frames were first presented, the picture remains, for the most part, the same (Figure 39). The Issues Frame remains to be the most salient aspect in Twitter and YouTube items. About 57.1% of YouTube videos and 40.5% of Twitter posts had the Issues Frame as the primary aspect of the messages. In the case of Facebook, the Issues Frame was the first and main aspect discussed in only 21.7% of the messages.

The Conflict Frame continued to be the most salient aspect in the Facebook campaign of this party. This result suggests that when the online messages of PdL included the Conflict Frame, this aspect was on the vast majority of occasions also the main focus of those messages, which differs from the traditional media and the online campaigns of the other parties analyzed. This result reinforces the idea that this party conducted an exceptionally negative campaign on Facebook. However, when we look at the first frames used on Facebook, the Issues Frame becomes considerably more salient than the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame (21.7% and 10.7% respectively). Even though, as we saw, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was overall more salient in the Facebook content, this aspect becomes less prominent in Facebook compared to the other SNS, when we only look at the main/first frames of the messages. Finally, on this platform, a relatively high proportion of messages focused on political scandals. The Scandal Frame was the primary topic in 6.3% of PdL's Facebook messages.

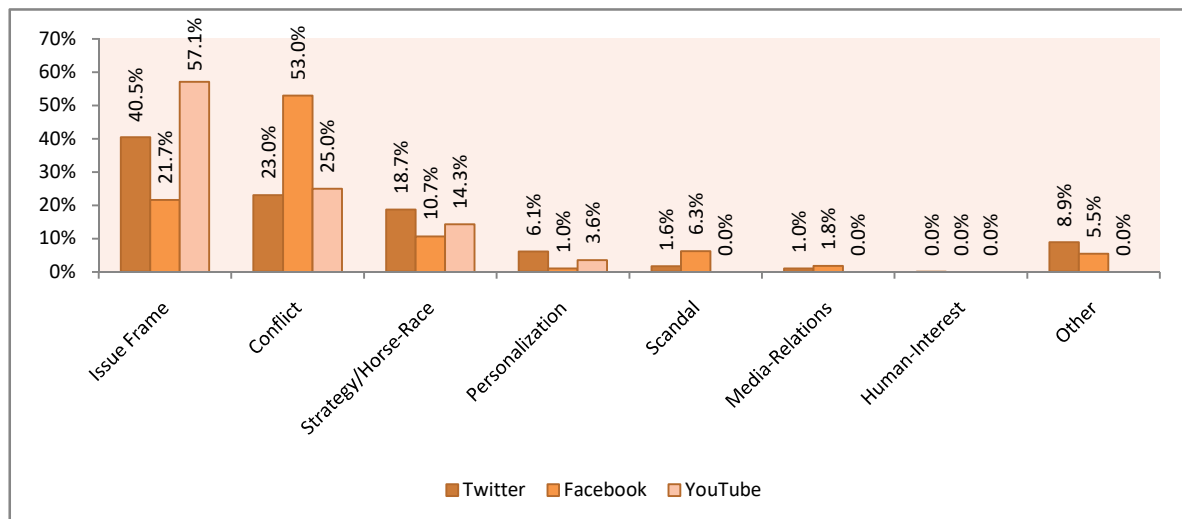


Figure 39 - First frame present in the SNS campaign of PdL.

Regarding the nature of the issues shown in the PdL campaign, contrary to what we saw for the news media and the other parties, the aspects related to Economy and Work were not the most salient ones (Figure 40). Instead, Finances and Taxes was the most salient category of issues in this party's campaign. This was mainly related to the already mentioned "Proposta Shock" and a tax amnesty that were frequently, and repeatedly, conveyed in this party's SNS posts, especially in YouTube videos, where the salience of this category was also higher (57.1%). Economy and Work aspects were, nevertheless, the second most discussed topic in all of the three online platforms. This campaign, regarding the nature of the issues discussed, was clearly dominated by one single topic or, one could even say, one or two issues.

Regarding the remaining categories, their salience was, overall, relatively low in the online campaign of this party. From these categories, Institutional Design and Foreign Policy received more visibility in the online campaign of PdL, the former on both Twitter and YouTube and the latter on YouTube only. While the institutional design considerations mainly related to changes in the electoral system to increase the country's governability (the case of the U.S. electoral system was often mentioned as a good example), and the introduction of popular vote for the election of the Italian president. Foreign Policy issues mainly related to Europe and European Integration. Nine of those categories were completely absent in at least one of the SNS, with the National Security category not being discussed by this party in any of the three platforms. Finally, an aspect worth mentioning is that, contrary to what we saw in the other cases, there were very few posts that dealt with more than one

type of issues in a more or less equal way (0.6% on Twitter and 4.7% on Facebook and even 0% in the case of YouTube).

Overall, the results clearly suggest that the online campaign of this party was not very diversified when it comes to the range of substantive political issues that were conveyed and discussed. Not only did a single topic of issues clearly dominate the online campaign of PdL but also the majority of the messages with the Issues Frame focused on a single campaign pledge of this party (to abolish a specific property tax and return, to the Italians, the money they paid for that tax in the previous year). What differed between those messages, if anything, was the source of the money needed to compensate Italian citizens, with some discussed sources including some agreements with Switzerland or even Berlusconi's own savings.

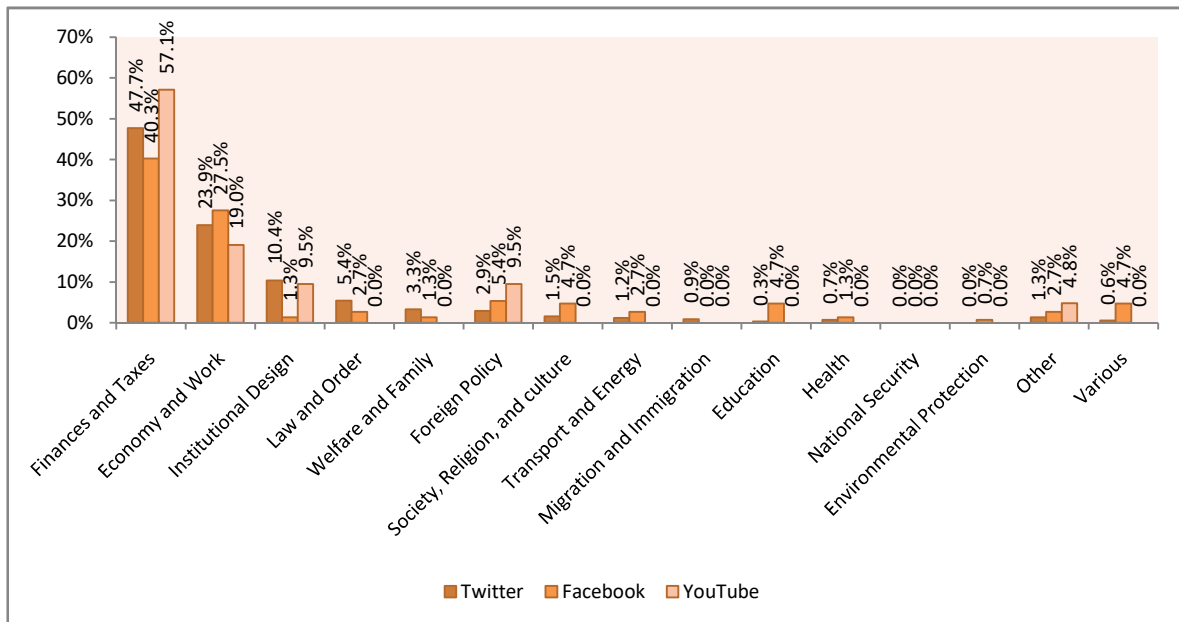


Figure 40 - Nature of the issues present in the SNS campaign of PdL.

As we saw previously, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was not particularly salient in the online campaign of this party. Regarding the sub-frames of this particular aspect, the PdL campaign on the SNS dealt mainly with strategy considerations, particularly in the Facebook campaign, where the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was also more frequently conveyed (Figure 41). The number of stories that included the Strategy sub-frame on this social media (33.9%) was considerably higher than the visibility of the same aspect on Twitter (13.6%) and on YouTube (7.14%). In other words, PdL used Facebook as its main channel to inform the audience about how the party was conducting its campaign, where the candidates had been, where they would be, and what the different offline even looked like. With respect to its

strategies, perhaps as a result of PdL's online crowd-sourcing initiatives, the campaign of this party in 2013 was, on some occasions, particularly innovative or original. The PdL often used "creative visualization"⁵⁹ campaign techniques, which related to Berlusconi's pledge to return a particular property tax to Italian citizens, were harshly criticized by the media and opponents. For example, this party sent seemingly official letters to citizens, during the campaign, which listed the different methods for getting a tax refund. The party not only circulated this letter on social media but it also sent by post the letter to a large number of citizens.

The salience of the remaining sub-frames was in general low, with the partial exception of Horse-Race aspect. The percentage of messages that presented the Horse-Race sub-frame was 8.6% on Twitter, 9.1% on Facebook and 7.1% on YouTube. This party and Berlusconi often used social media, especially after the publication of opinion polls was forbidden, to inform the public either that PdL was steadily growing in voting intentions or that the center-coalition was dropping in the opinion polls. While the Turnout sub-frame was relatively salient on YouTube, appearing in 7.1% of videos, the remaining aspects were either absent or on only very few occasions included in the content of the three social media analyzed. Once again, none of the three SNS included messages dealing with the fundraising aspect.

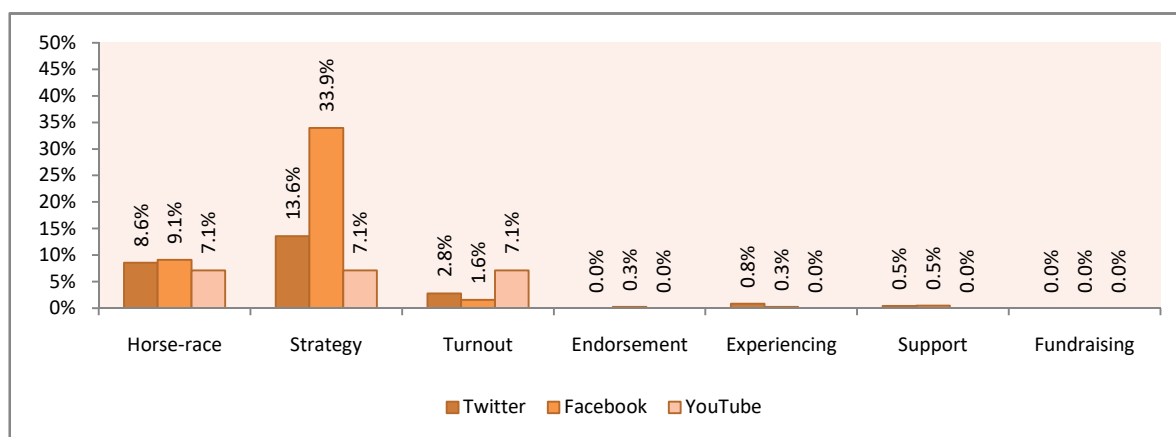


Figure 41 - Type of strategy present in the SNS campaign of PdL.

The type of conflict present in the SNS campaign of PdL is also similar to what we observed in the online campaign of the other two Italian parties. As Figure 42 shows, the attacks on the opponents' personal traits and values were the most frequent type of conflict in all three social media. On both Facebook and YouTube, more than half of the attacks shown

⁵⁹ L'ex premier spera di guadagnare un 2% E i sondaggisti: la mossa lo aiuta, *Corriere della Sera* (04/02/13).

(55% on both platforms) were aimed at the opponents' traits or values. In the case of Twitter, the proportion of this type of attacks was lower but nevertheless high (44%). In order to clean or improve his image among the electorate, part of Berlusconi's strategy in this election was to blame everyone he could, from Merkel and the EU to his former coalition partners, for the end of his previous government. For this reason, the political issues of the electoral opponents were seldom the objective of PdL's online criticism. In his attempt to shift the responsibility for the downfall of his government and the Italian economic and financial crisis, Berlusconi, during the campaign, often stated that he did not have enough power as prime-minister and that he would become, in the case of winning the 2013 election, minister of economy.

Overall, the targets of PdL's campaign attacks were extremely diversified and included not only the party's electoral opponents but also the traditional media, international political actors and even the Italian legal system. With respect to the media, the online messages of PdL attacked, both Italian and foreign, journalists and the Italian public television for their biased coverage (e.g. for not giving enough salience to the MPs scandal) or even interference in the campaign. Even the fact that one of the Italian public channels (TG3) did not start its main news program with the pope's resignation statements was a motive for Berlusconi's criticism during the campaign. Regarding PdL's electoral opponents, the incumbent prime minister, Mario Monti, was one of the main targets of the negative campaign of this party. Among other things, Monti was compared to Mussolini, accused of being Merkel's puppet, criticized for his "American" campaigning style and even accused of having led an illegitimate (non democratic) government.

The proportion of attacks aimed at the opponents' political issues was higher on YouTube (36%), which could also be expected given that the salience of the Issues Frame was also higher on this platform. On the other two social media, the proportion of attacks on political issues was 28%, in the case of Twitter, and 23% on Facebook. Overall, even though the Issues Frame was one of the most salient aspects in PdL's campaign, a relatively small proportion of conflict was aimed at the opponent's political issues. In this sense, we can say that the online campaign of this party mainly focused on conveying its own political positions rather than discussing or criticizing the issues raised by the other parties during the campaign.

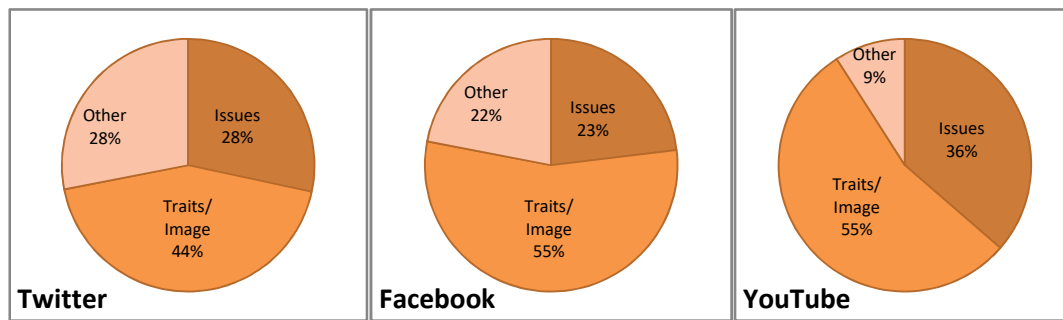


Figure 42 - Type of conflict present in the SNS campaign of PdL.

As we saw, the PdL's campaign on Twitter and Facebook was considerably different regarding the salience of the different media frames analyzed in this study. In addition to this, also the type of additional content that this party included in these two social media differed considerably (Figure 43). PdL's campaign on Twitter relied mostly on the 140 characters that this micro-blogging allowed, with 89.8% of the posts not having any additional content. On Twitter, as also happened in the case of SC, the party mostly used this platform to quote its leader (with some of those quotes being also repeated throughout the campaign). In addition to this, also several videos that were included (4%) on Twitter were reposted several times. Overall, even though PdL was the party that more often used Twitter to campaign (posting in average 76 messages per day), a good amount of that content was often "recycled" and repeated on different days. In other words, we could say that the Twitter campaign of this party was mainly focused on quantity (i.e. having a large post rate) than quality (i.e. offering original content to the users). Finally, a very small percentage of the Twitter messages included a picture (4%), a non-journalistic article (1.7%), live streaming videos (0.5%) and, on only two occasions, also an article from the traditional media.

On the other hand, on Facebook, almost 90% of the posts included articles from the official website of the party. While Twitter had a clearly Berlusconi-centered campaign, the Facebook messages focused more on the opinion of other PdL candidates that fed this party's website with various articles. In other words, these two social media conveyed information from completely different sources which also help us to understand why the salience of the different media frames was also so different, and why the Conflict Frame was also considerably more salient on Facebook. Only 1.3% of the Facebook posts did not include any type of additional content. The remaining messages on this platform included either a picture (5%) or a video (4.2%). Unlike Twitter, none of the Facebook posts included a live streaming video of the campaign or articles written by journalists.

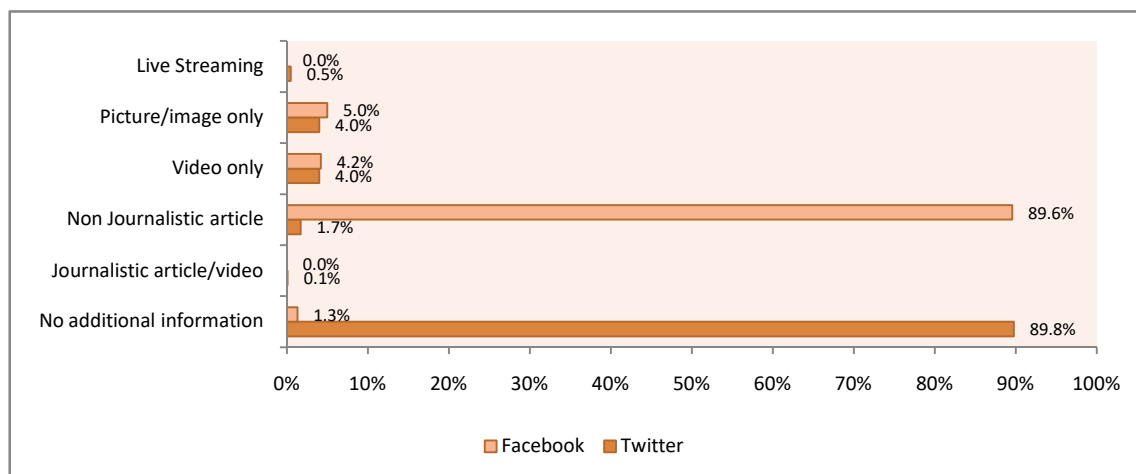


Figure 43 - Additional information present in the SNS campaign of PdL.

5.5 – Movimento Cinque Stelle’s campaign on the SNS.

The Five Star Party (M5S) was a party born from a movement built around the popularity of an Internet blog created by the Italian actor and comedian Beppe Grillo. This party was, according to the press, the “January surprise”⁶⁰ of this 2013 Italian campaign because of its steady and rapid growth in the opinion polls. This party had, at the time, 13.1% of voting intention, which made it the third biggest party in the election. What nobody anticipated, however, was that M5S would end up being the most voted party in the 2013 Italian general election, receiving 25.6% of the popular vote.

The nature and origin of M5S almost perfectly mirrors the Howard Dean’s movement, which the literature has pointed out was one of the first and best examples of online political campaigns. Similar to Dean’s movement, M5S consisted initially of a large and active online community with broad common interests that started to use meetup to get together in different physical locations. M5S also shared the same anti-establishment message of that U.S candidate, being extremely critical of traditional politicians, parties and the media. Overall, the main campaign message of M5S was the populist “us against them”⁶¹, which can also help us understand the electoral success of the party amid a campaign so fruitful in scandals involving political actors. According to the Italian press, these scandals, particularly the one related to Monte dei Paschi, were the main lever for the electoral success of M5S⁶².

⁶⁰ Si restringe la distanza tra Bersani e il Cavaliere Grillo su, centristi in calo, *Corriere della Sera* (29/01/13).

⁶¹ La marea di Grillo anche a Milano “I politici si devono arrendere”, *La Repubblica* (20/02/13).

⁶² I voti e le incognite che fanno saltare i conti Il rischio ingovernabilità, *Corriere della Sera* (09/02/13).

Throughout the campaign, Grillo constantly criticized the traditional media and avoided the journalists. The leader of M5S, which was not a candidate of the party, accepted to give only one interview to the television channel Sky during the campaign. An interview that, nevertheless, Grillo later cancelled. With the television ruled out by the party as an option, the campaign of M5S was mostly made on two channels, the streets and the Internet. These were the only two options for Italians to learn more, in an unmediated way, about the campaign and policy proposals of the party. In the streets, the campaign rallies of M5S headed by Grillo all over Italy, and named the “tsunami tour”, always gathered impressive numbers of participants. On the Internet, the party actively campaigned through social media and its 24-hour online channel “La Cosa”. In light of the above, the analysis of the campaign conducted by M5S on social media becomes particularly relevant.

With respect to the media frames used by M5S on its social media campaign, two interesting results can be highlighted. firstly, as we can see in Figure 44, a relatively high proportion of SNS messages from M5S included the Media-Relations Frame. This aspect was shown in 7.5% of the Twitter posts and 8.9% of the Facebook messages. While this media frame was the least salient, and partially neglected, aspect in all of the three campaigns previously analyzed (SC, PD and PdL), in the case of M5S, the Media-Relations Frame was the fourth most salient aspect of the online messaging. This result reinforces the importance that, in a way, the traditional media had in the campaign of this party and in the discourse of its leader. As was previously mentioned, together with the traditional parties and politicians, the mainstream media was the main target of M5S’s campaign and criticism. Overall, Grillo often accused the traditional media of both favoring the old parties and candidates and distorting the campaign of M5S by, for example, underestimating the number of citizens attending the different party rallies.

The second interesting aspect in these results is that, even though the M5S actively criticized the traditional media and its news coverage of the electoral campaign, from all of the four Italian parties analyzed in this chapter, it was the online campaign of M5S that, on the surface, mostly resembled the news coverage of mainstream media. In other words, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the most salient aspect in the party’s online campaign. About 60% of the news on all three SNS dealt with aspects related to winning/losing in the race and the way the party was conducting its campaign. Furthermore, if we exclude YouTube that had a very low number of cases, also the Conflict Frame was more salient than the Issues Frame in the online campaign of M5S. However, compared to the news coverage of the election, this difference, in terms of the salience of both conflict and issues, was not so evident in the social

media content of the party. While the Conflict Frame was present in 27.7% of the Twitter posts and 30.6% of the items on Facebook, substantive political issues were discussed in 25.7% and 26.7% of the Twitter and Facebook content, respectively. Nevertheless, also when compared to the other Italian parties analyzed, the online campaign of M5S had the lowest salience of the Issues Frame.

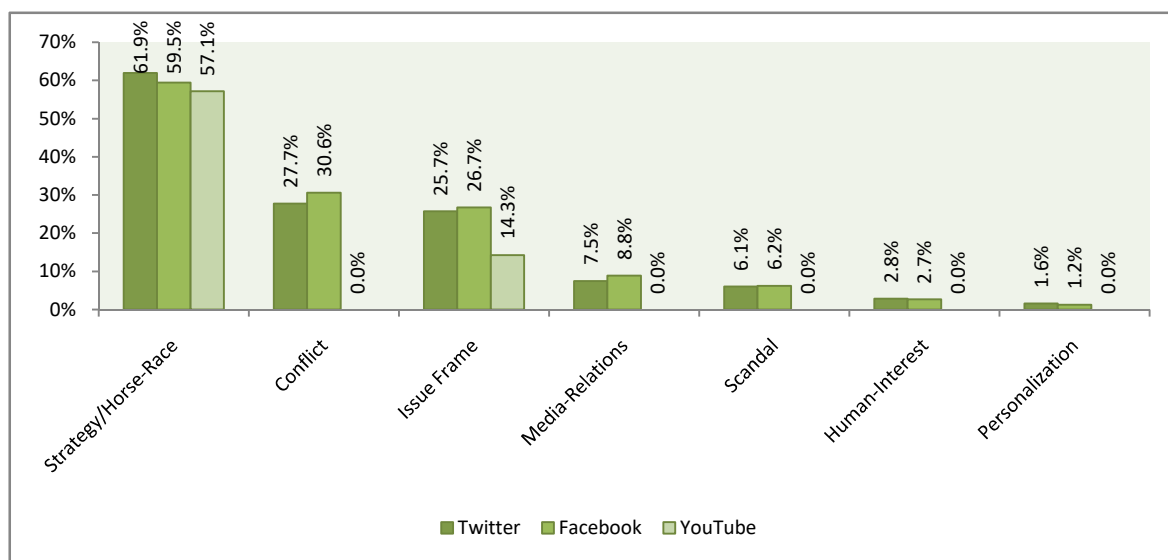


Figure 44 - Frames present in the SNS campaign of M5S.

Overall, similar to the press and different from the online campaign of the other three main parties, a relatively small proportion of the SNS messages of M5S conveyed and discussed substantive political issues. In this sense, the individuals that closely followed the party's online campaign on the social media did not have many opportunities to know and learn more about the political positions and pledges of the party. In fact, from all of the online campaigns analyzed, this campaign resembled the most the hypothesized example of a *hollow campaign* where, for strategic considerations, political candidates or parties might avoid any discussion of substantive political issues. In the case of this party, its broad anti-establishment and anti-corruption rhetoric, as well as its "rejection of any scheme of political classification" (Bordignon & Ceccarini, 2013, p.436), which attracted individuals from a very wide range of the ideological spectrum, might have hindered it from presenting and discussing its positions on concrete political issues more often. In other words, the campaign of M5S in 2013 might be a very good example of a party avoiding to discuss substantive political issues more frequently during a campaign in order not to alienate its electorate. A good example of this, which clearly illustrates the party's campaign, was Facebook post of M5S simply stating that the first article of the Italian constitution should be the "right for happiness".

The salience of the remaining media frames was relatively low on all SNS. Nevertheless, also in light with the anti-establishment rhetoric of the party, the Scandal Frame was present in about 6% of the messages on both Twitter and Facebook. It is also interesting to note that the Personalization Frame was practically absent from the party's online campaign despite this movement, and its campaign, being strongly centered on Grillo's image. Perhaps this resulted from a deliberate attempt by the party to be perceived as a more democratic movement rather than just a political endeavor of another charismatic Italian figure. More concretely, the low salience of the Personalization Frame might have resulted from an attempt to convey Grillo simply as the voice of a movement/party rather than its leader/owner.

Finally, two other aspects that are important to mention are the low number of YouTube videos (and therefore few media frames) and the strong similarities between Twitter and Facebook regarding the salience of the different media frames in the party's campaign. Regarding the first point, M5S was the only party analyzed that had an extremely small number of videos uploaded on its YouTube channel. Two aspects contributed to this development. The first and most important one was the fact that this party had, during the campaign, an online channel transmitting the campaign 24-hours per day. The second one was the existence of other YouTube channels, especially the "Iacosa", which the party also used to share videos during the campaign. With respect to the similarities between Twitter and Facebook, M5S was the only party that conveyed practically the same content in different social media. Rather than using the different SNS with different purposes, the M5S used them simply to expand the online reach of its campaign messages. As a result, the content that was posted in one of the online platforms was "recycled" and conveyed, with very small differences, in the other. In fact, not only was the salience of the frames similar in both platforms but also the number of posts (494 in Twitter and 565 in Facebook).

If we look at what were the frames presented first (Figure 45), the picture remains mostly unchanged. As expected the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame continues to be the most salient aspect in the online campaign of M5S. Also the salience of both Scandal and Media-Relations frames remains similar. This means that, when the online messages of this party included one of these two media frames, they were on most occasions also the primary aspects conveyed in those messages.

The most noticeable difference related to the Conflict Frame that becomes less salient than the Issues Frame. To put it differently, even though, overall, the Conflict Frame was included more often in the online messages of this party than the Issues Frame, the Conflict

Frame was the central aspect of the stories or messages on fewer occasions. Only 14.8% of the Twitter posts and 16.6% of the Facebook items had conflict as the first and main aspect of the message. Comparatively, about 20% of the content on both platforms had the Issues Frame as the primary aspect of the message. The fact that conflict, and not substantive political issues, is often not the primary aspect of the articles and messages is another pattern that we have been observing in the news coverage of political events. As a consequence, when we only look at the first/main media frames of the press articles, and in this case also M5S online posts, the substantive political issues become more salient than attacks and conflict between political actors.

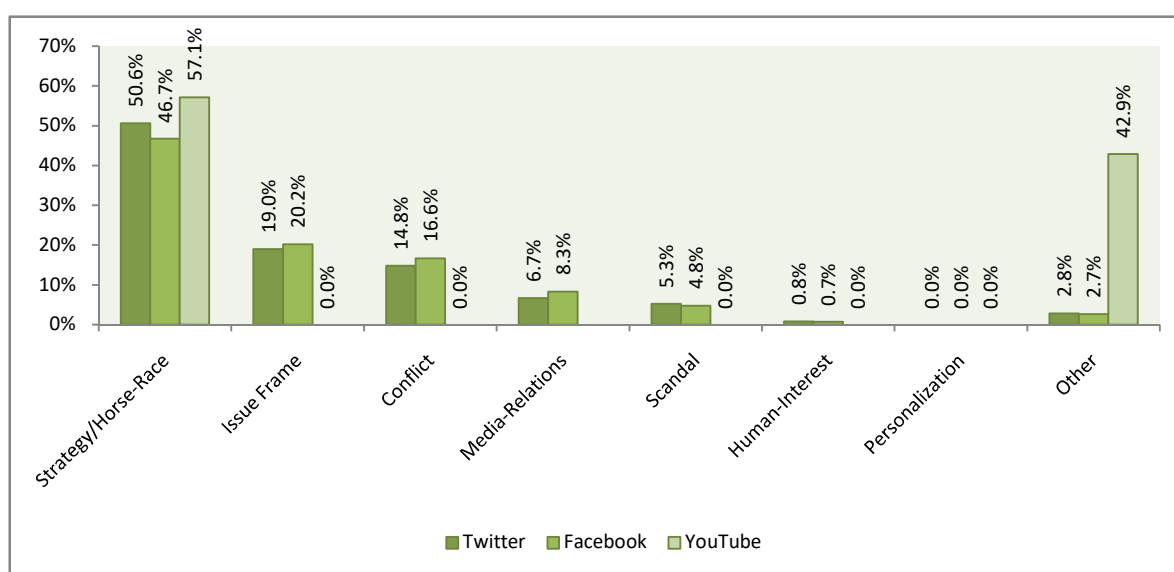


Figure 45 - First Frame present in the SNS campaign of M5S.

The analysis of the nature of the issues presented in the online campaign of M5S further shows that Twitter and Facebook were used by this party to convey the same content. As we can see in the Figure 46, the salience of the different categories of issues was, in the majority of the cases, identical on the two platforms. M5S, however, was the only Italian party analyzed that did not have the Finances and Taxes as one of the two most salient categories of issues. Instead, the two most prominent types of issues in the party's campaign were 'Economy and Work' and 'Welfare and Family'. In a way, this result also suggests that this party did not take cues, with respect to the issues conveyed in the campaign, from the campaigns of the other parties or from the traditional media news coverage.

Overall, the issues discussed by this party, besides aspects related to Economy and Work, mainly revolved around institutional reforms to reduce corruption and MPs' privileges, increasing the citizens' social benefits (e.g. basic income guarantee) or, similarly to PdL,

reduce taxes or end the Italian agency responsible for tax collection (Equitalia). M5S also campaigned against public funding of political parties and, as we will see, it was the only Italian party analyzed that used social media for fundraising. Also issues related to environmental protection, the only topic absent in the news media coverage of the election and rarely discussed in the online campaign of the other three Italian parties, were relatively salient in the online campaign of M5S. About 5.5% of the Twitter posts that included issues focused on environmental aspects, while on Facebook that figure was even slightly higher (6.6%).

Only two categories of issues (Society, Religion, and Culture and Migration and Immigration) were absent from the party's online campaign. Again, this might have resulted from an attempt of the party to avoid discussing more controversial and cross-cutting issues during its campaign in order not to alienate part of its heterogeneous and encompassing electorate. While the migration aspect was not very prominent in the Italian election, the same cannot be said about the Society, Religion and Culture category, which was relatively salient in both news media coverage and in the campaign of the other main Italian parties (with the exception of PdL).

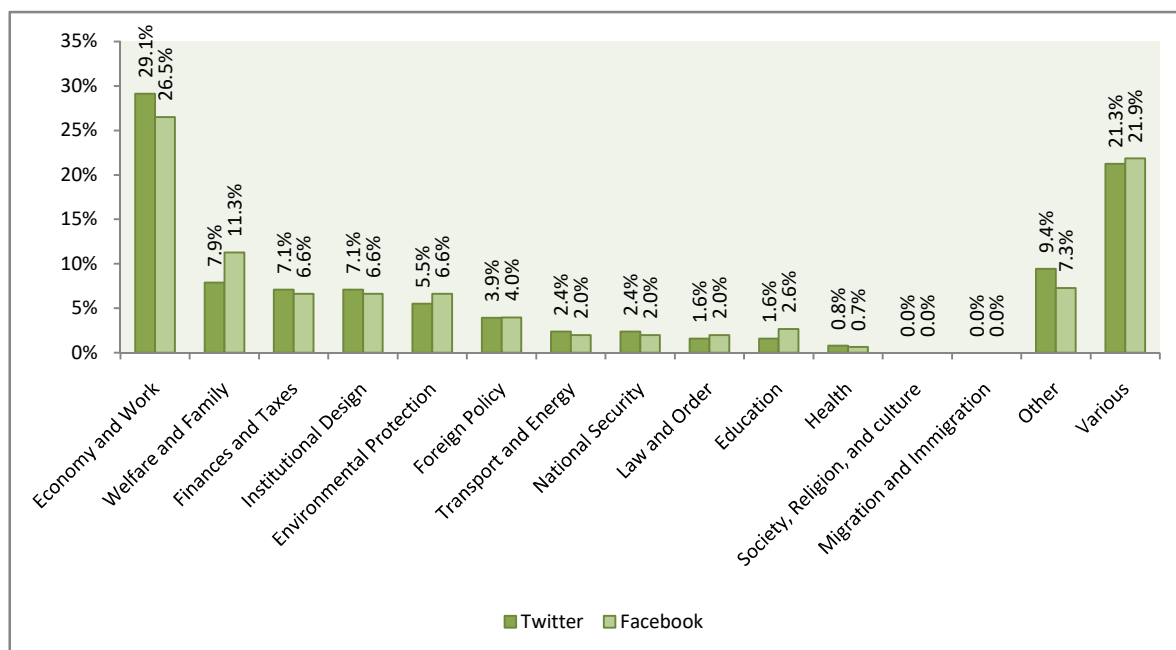


Figure 46 - Type of issues present in the SNS campaign of M5S.

As we previously saw, the most salient media frame in the online campaign of M5S was Strategy/Horse-Race. However, only when looking at the sub aspects of this frame (Figure 47) is it possible to understand the uniqueness of the (online) campaign of M5S. The

real campaign of M5S was made in the Italian piazzas (public squares) and the main purpose of social media was simply to broadcast those political rallies or, one could say, Beppe Grillo's shows. While for other parties the Internet was simply an additional campaigning arena, for M5S, coherent to its anti-traditional media rhetoric, the Internet was its main (only) broadcasting channel. In a way, M5S was the only party that truly campaigned on cyberspace. For this reason the most salient sub-frame of Strategy/Horse-Race in the social media campaign of M5S, if we exclude YouTube for obvious reasons already discussed, was the Experiencing of the campaign. In fact, about 35% of Twitter messages and 32% of Facebook posts included links to live streaming videos where the Internet users could follow the party rallies and the leader's speeches.

The remaining posts with the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame also related to the rallies of M5S and the way this party was conducting its campaign as well as the location. The Strategy sub-frame was included in almost 30% of the social media items of the party. The majority of these messages included photos of the party's campaign events showing, most of the time, the large numbers of citizens that attended them. These images and posts were also often used by M5S to criticize both news media and electoral opponents. On the one hand this party often accused the traditional media of deliberately choosing unfavorable pictures to suggest that few people had attended its rallies. In this sense, social media were used by M5S as unbiased proof of its popularity. On the other hand, M5S also used images of its campaign to convey the idea that they were the only party that had fully attended rallies, while the others had relied on television and the traditional media for visibility.

The Horse-Race aspect was practically absent from the party's online campaign. Only roughly one percent of the social media content of M5S dealt with this sub-frame. The same can be said about the Support sub-frame. Only on very few occasions did the M5S use social media during the campaign to mobilize supporters to help its campaign. Finally, M5S was the only party that used the Internet, and social media, to collect funds for its campaign. Nevertheless, this was done also on extremely few occasions. Similar to Howard Dean's campaign website in 2004, M5S also had in their website a "barometer" showing how much money had been already raised for the campaign with a set goal to be achieved.

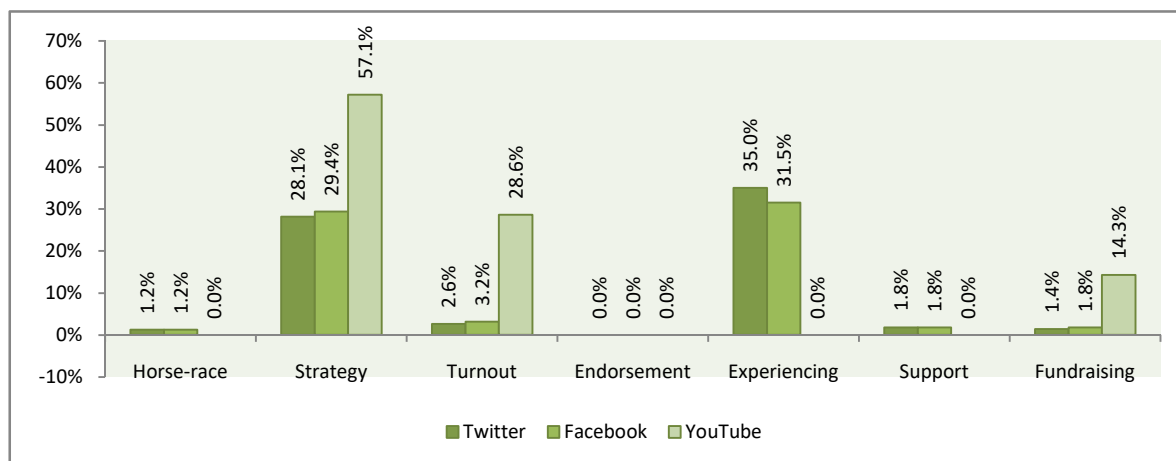


Figure 47 - Sub-frames of strategy present in the SNS campaign of M5S.

With respect to the type of conflict present in the online campaign of M5S, the attacks aimed at the opponent's traits and values were the most salient (Figure 48). About 60% of the attacks on the SNS were of this particular nature. M5S mainly accused the opponents of being part of a "rotten" political system and belonging to an elite that did not care about the problems of ordinary citizens. Contrarily, on only very few occasions (9%) the criticism and attacks of this party were directed at the political issues raised and discussed by its opponents. To some extent, this result further suggests that this party was not particularly interested in discussing, in its campaign, the different issues being conveyed by its opponents.

A considerable amount of attacks, about 30% on both platforms, was not related to the issues and traits of the other candidates. As we already mentioned, one of the main targets in the campaign of M5S were the journalists and the traditional media that were accused of favoring the established parties and undermine the M5S.

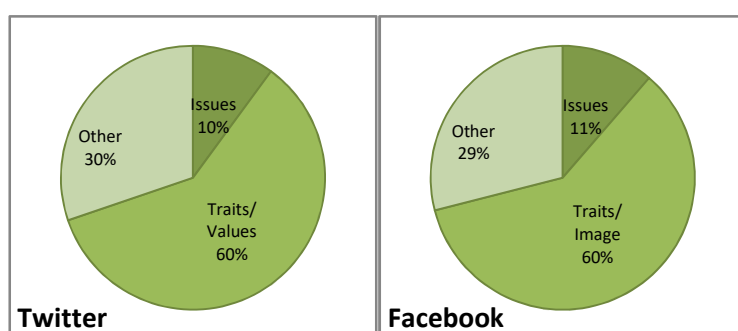


Figure 48 - Type of conflict present in the SNS campaign of M5S.

Finally, Figure 49 reflects what we already mentioned regarding the uniqueness of the party's online campaign. M5S explored the Internet's interactive potential to allow Italian citizens to "experience" the party's campaign while sitting in their own computer chairs. All

of the Twitter posts, and almost all of the Facebook messages, included some sort of additional content. In the case of Twitter, the additional content of the social media messages was, on most occasions (70.5%), a non-journalistic article, usually from the Internet blog of M5S. Also a relatively high proportion of Twitter items included a link to a live streaming video (26.2%). These posts often also included a picture, which explains why only 1.2% of the Twitter messages only included a picture or image. The remaining messages of this platform either included a video, on 1.6% of occasions, or, on two single occasions, a journalistic article.

In the case of Facebook, an identical proportion of messages (about 45%) included either a link to a live streaming video or a non-journalistic article. A small proportion of messages on this platform included simply a picture (3%) while videos were included in only 3.7% of the Facebook items. Like Twitter, two Facebook posts also included an article from the traditional news media.

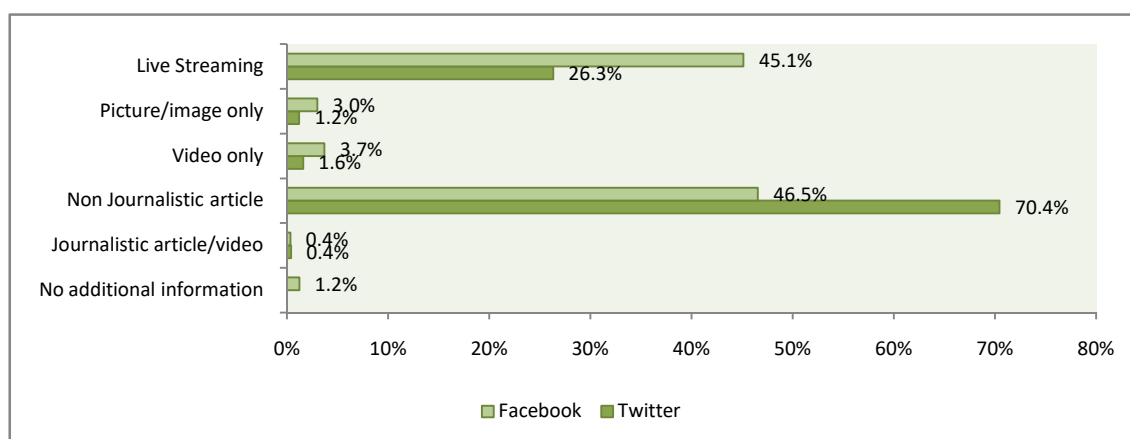


Figure 49 - Additional information present in the SNS campaign of M5S.

5.6 – *The Italian parliamentary election of 2013, uninformative news or hollow campaign?*

Having analyzed both the campaign made by the main political parties on the Internet and the traditional news media coverage of the election, the figures and results presented in this section help compare the campaign offered by those two media. Again, we are mainly interested in analyzing how the parties framed their campaigns in comparison to the frames used by the journalists (by giving the same weight to all for parties and the different SNS). This comparison will help us understand better if the lack of substantive political issues in the news coverage of the election mainly resulted from editorial norms and journalists’

preferences or from uninformative campaigns conducted, for strategic reasons, by the main Italian parties.

The results suggest, similar to what we saw for the U.S. case, that the online campaign of the Italian parties, compared to the press, gave less salience to Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict aspects of the campaign (Figure 50). As we already saw, the most prominent aspect in the news coverage of the 2013 Italian campaign was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. Almost 60% of the articles in the press dealt with these aspects. Differently, the salience of this frame in social media was considerably lower (being included in only 43% of the items analyzed). In fact, in the averaged SNS campaign of the four main Italian parties, the salience of the Issues Frame was even slightly higher than Strategy/Horse-Race. Regarding the salience of the Conflict Frame, there were also considerable differences between the traditional media and the parties' online campaign. More than half of the newspaper articles (51.8%) included some sort of conflict between campaign actors. Comparatively, only 30% of the social media messages included attacks. In light of this, and as we saw in the literature review that the presence of conflict and strategy/horse-race considerations in the news articles distracts the public from the substantive issues discussed in the campaign as well as increases their political cynicism, we could say that the news coverage of the 2013 Italian election was not particularly informative to the Italian electorate.

The percentage of social media content that discussed substantive political issues was 43.7%, a figure that is very close to the one found by Fraia & Missaglia (2015) in a similar analysis of the Twitter accounts of Italian politicians during this election. Comparatively, only 29.4% of the articles from the press dealt extensively with substantive political issues. The remaining media frames, with the exception of the Human-Interest, were all more salient in the press, in comparison to the parties' online campaign. The differences were particularly significant in the case of the Scandal Frame where the proportion of items in the press that dealt with this aspect was more than four times higher than in social media. Overall, four of the media frames analyzed (Strategy/Horse-Race; Conflict; Issues Frame; Personalization; and Scandal) had differences statistically significant (at the 0.001 level) in the direction that was predicted in the *Uninformative News* hypothesis.

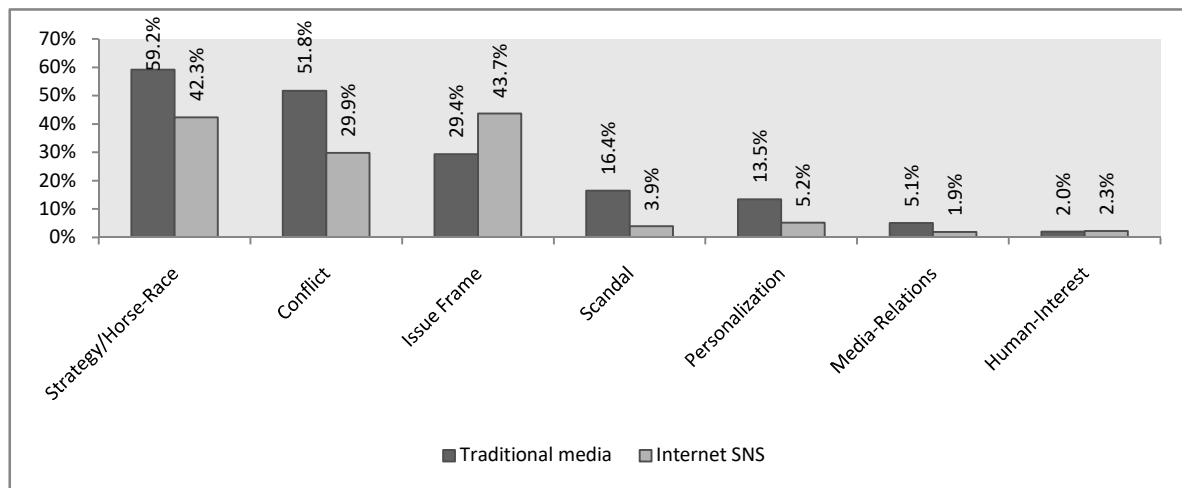


Figure 50 - Frames present in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2013 Italian Elections.

Table 8 - Salience of Issues and Conflict in the SNS campaign and newspaper articles exclusively focused on one of the Italian parties⁶³.

	Issues				Conflict			
	SC	PD	PdL	M5S	SC	PD	PdL	M5S
News Coverage	40%	39%	40.2%	35.5%	55%	62.7%	64.6%	77.4%
SNS Campaign	51.3%	46.8%	54.3%	22.5%	20.1%	32.4%	47.1%	29.2%
News – SNS	-11.3	-7.8	-14.1	13	34.9	30.3	17.5	48.2

When we only look at the news articles exclusively focused on only one of the parties analyzed, in Table 8, we can see that there were considerable differences between the press and social media. Those differences were more evident in the case of the Conflict Frame. The news coverage that those parties received, particularly M5S, was considerably more negative than their online campaigns. From the four parties analyzed, in the press, the news articles exclusively focused on M5S were both more likely to include conflict and less likely to discuss substantive political issues, which suggests that the campaign of this party was both more negative and less informative. The analysis of social media partially confirms that in terms of the Issues Frame, M5S was indeed the Italian party that less often conveyed substantive political issues on the social media. With respect to the conflict aspect, however, it was in the online campaign of PdL where this aspect was more frequently presented. In fact,

⁶³ Number/percentage of newspaper articles focused exclusively on one of the parties: Scelta (60/8.1%); PD(59/8%); PdL(82/11.1%); M5S(31/4.2%).

it was in the PdL's social media campaign that the proportion of items with either the Issues Frame or the Conflict Frame was higher.

If we analyze only which media frame was presented first in the news media and on the SNS, the differences remain statically significant but, similarly to what we observed in the U.S. case, the Conflict Frame becomes now more salient on the SNS. The Conflict Frame was the primary aspect in 18.5% of the social media items while only 16.3% of the newspaper articles had conflict as its first and main aspect (Figure 51). This change demonstrates that even though conflict between political actors is more often shown in the press, in comparison to the candidates' and parties' SNS campaigns, this frame is less often the first/main frame in the newspaper articles. As we discussed, this mainly results from differences between the two types of media, with the social media being most of the time shorter and directly to the point (therefore usually discussing a smaller variety of aspects in one message or video). It nevertheless also suggests that most of the time, contrary to what the literature often claims, political conflict is not, per se, a newsworthy aspect for the traditional media but rather a supplement to other campaign aspects (most of the time strategy and horse-race). On the other hand, for the same reasons, the difference between the press and SNS, in terms of the salience of the Issues Frame, also becomes more evident. While 31.4% of the online items had the Issues Frame as the first/main aspect of the story, only 13.1% of the newspaper articles were primarily framed in terms of the discussion of substantive political issues.

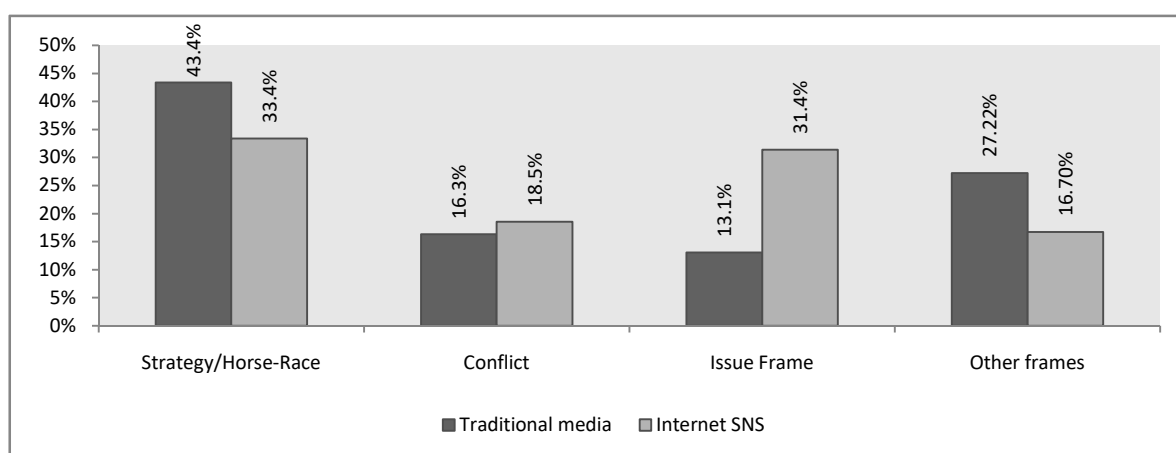


Figure 51 - First frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2013 Italian Elections.

Regarding the type of issues that were present in the news media and on the SNS, the results show that there were clearly two categories of issues (Economy and Works; and Finances and Taxes), that dominated both the news coverage of this election and the campaign of the candidates on the Internet (Figure 52). Regarding the remaining types of

issues, even though the salience of those topics in the press was generally lower than in the SNS campaign, the differences were not big enough to suggest that some categories of issues, which were important for the parties during the campaign, were partially neglected by the media. The only type of issue that was completely absent from the Italian news coverage of the campaign was environmental protection. However, the salience of this topic on the social media was also extremely small. Only one percent of the social media items with the Issues Frames were related to the environment and its protection. Overall, in terms of the nature of issues discussed, the news coverage made by the press was similar to the online campaign of the four main Italian parties in the 2013 general election.

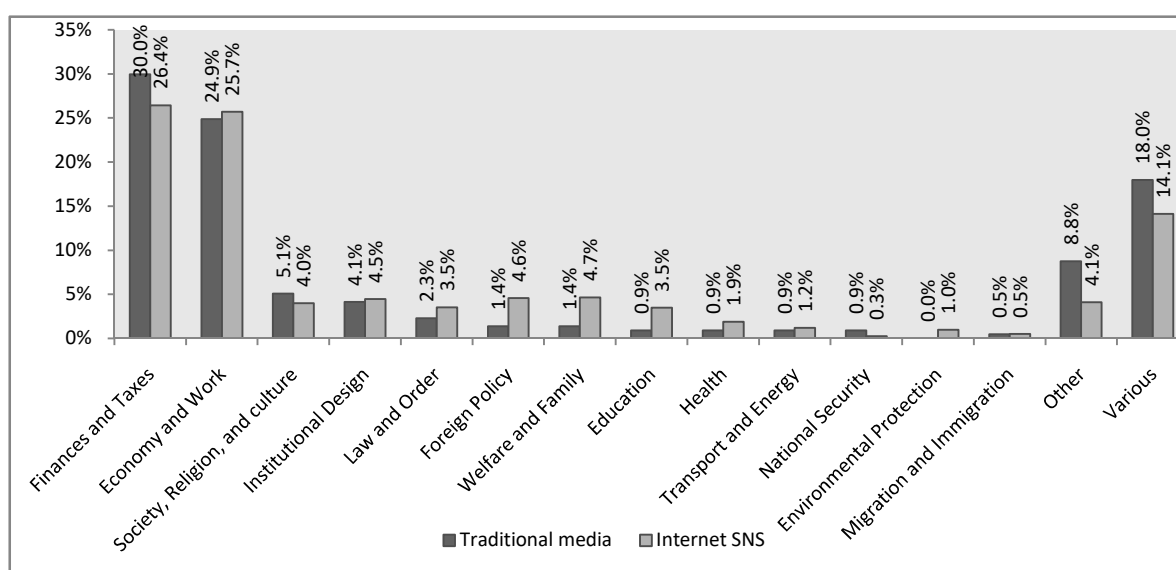


Figure 52 - Type of issues in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2013 Italian Elections.

In conclusion, the results in the analysis of the 2013 Italian election, and how the campaign was framed by both journalists and parties, were identical to what we observed for the 2012 U.S. election. Once again we found support for our *Uninformative News* hypothesis that suggests that the commercial logic of news media is hindering the journalists from offering more informative news articles to the citizens. These results confirmed that Italian journalists reported the campaign mainly in terms of the candidates' strategies, how they campaign and winning or losing in general, to the detriment of substantive political issues. In fact there were, in the Italian press, a higher proportion of articles primarily framed in terms of conflict rather than substantive political issues. Perhaps even more concerning is the fact that, in the press, the proportion of articles primarily framed in terms of Scandal was almost as high as the percentage of articles with the main purpose of discussing substantive political issues. When we consider the main/first frame, the press only included the Issues Frame in

13.1% of the articles. On the other hand, both Issues and Strategy/Horse-Race Frames had similar salience in the social media campaign of the four main Italian parties. Overall, similar to what we saw for the U.S. case, the results discussed in this chapter seem to further support our *Uninformative News* hypothesis.

In the next chapter we conduct a similar analysis for the first round of the Brazilian election in 2014. We will look at how this campaign was portrayed by the journalists and the campaign conducted by the three main candidates in this election on social media.

Chapter Six- News Coverage and Online Campaign in the first round of the Brazilian Presidential Elections of 2014

6.1 – The news coverage of the Brazilian election.

The first round of the 2014 Brazilian presidential election took place on October 5 and had three main candidates with reasonable chances of winning or at least contesting an eventual runoff election. One of them was Dilma Rousseff, the incumbent president of Brazil and the candidate of Partido Trabalhista (PT). A second main candidate in the election was Aécio Neves, a former Governor of Minas Gerais and candidate of Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB). Aécio started the campaign as Dilma's main challenger, with opinion polls placing him in second place. It was initially expected that these two candidates would be the main competitors and opponents in the 2014 Brazilian election. However, this scenario completely changed on August 13 when, less than two months before the first round of the election, the candidate of Partido Socialista Brasileiro (PSB), Eduardo Campos, died in an airplane accident during his campaign. After the accident, Eduardo's running mate, Marina Silva, was chosen by PSB to be the party's candidate in the presidential election. As a result of this, Marina Silva, a renowned environmentalist that was a former member of PT and a former minister in one of Lula's governments, immediately became a frontrunner in this election, with some polls even showing her with some advantage over Dilma in an eventual second round scenario. For this reason, the last month of this election had an extremely competitive campaign. On the one hand, Dilma started to lose her lead in the polls to Marina. On the other hand, Aécio was no longer the incumbent's main challenger in the Brazilian presidential election. As a consequence of these developments, Marina Silva became, according to the press, the main target of attacks of both Aécio and Marina and would eventually fail to be in the second round of the election that was won by the incumbent candidate, Dilma Rouseff.

Regarding the news coverage of the Brazilian election of 2014, the results show a pattern similar to the one observed in both the U.S. and Italian cases. Again, the most salient frame was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame (Figure 53). About 63% of news articles from Folha de São Paulo included this Media Frame, while in Globo the proportion of news pieces with this aspect was slightly smaller (51%). In addition to this, the second most salient aspect in the news coverage of the Brazilian campaign was conflict and attacks between political actors. This frame was present in 42.6% of Folha's news pieces and in 46.2% of Globo's

news items. In fact, a good amount of the stories combined those two media frames, Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict, by focusing on how candidates were using conflict as part of their campaign strategy.

The negative campaign was for example, according to the press, the main strategy used by Dilma's campaign team to stop Marina's rise in the polls when the latter started to challenge the president's chances for reelection⁶⁴. Apparently Dilma's campaign was so negative and deceptive that even a famous Brazilian director, Fernando Meirelles, compared Dilma's campaign manager to Joseph Goebbels⁶⁵. This campaign also reflected one of the main findings of Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995), according to which when a candidate is attacked by an opponent, that candidate should "go negative" and return those attacks. The fact that Marina decided to not engage in a negative campaign might be one of the reasons why this candidate was ultimately unable to even progress to the second round. An opinion that was shared by Brazilian political scientists⁶⁶.

With respect to the discussion of substantive political issues, the salience of the Issues Frame was very low in the press coverage of the campaign. In *Folha*, only 26.7% of the stories included this frame, with only 22.9% of all news articles including also the candidates' position on different political issues. In *Globo*, the results were identical, with substantive political issues being extensively discussed in only 25.7% of the articles in the newspaper. However, the lack of issues in the news coverage of this campaign might be related to the fact that the main candidates in this campaign were extremely reluctant in releasing detailed policy programs.

Marina was the only candidate that released her government program one month before election day. This program ended up being subject to extreme scrutiny and was attacked by Marina's opponents, in particular owing to the fact that the program suffered some changes throughout the campaign. For this reason, one of Dilma's campaign spots accused Marina of having a pencil-written program. Perhaps afraid of having their policies scrutinized and attacked, as was the case concerning Marina, the other two candidates either released their program just some days before election day, in the case of Aécio, or simply did not release it at all, like in the case of Dilma. Saying that paper-written government programs were something old-fashioned, Dilma conveyed her policy positions exclusively through the

⁶⁴ Agressividade pode se voltar contra Dilma, diz especialista. *Folha de São Paulo* (12/09/14).

⁶⁵ Marketeiro do PT diz que vai processar Fernando Meirelles, *Folha de São Paulo* (26/09/14).

⁶⁶ Um candidato estagnado e defensivo, *O Globo* (19/09/14).

Internet and TV commercials⁶⁷. An approach similar to the one taken by Aécio⁶⁸. Even though the presidential candidates were obliged by electoral law to present a government plan, they bypassed this requirement by delivering just a shorter document with very general policy guidelines⁶⁹.

Overall, similarly to the news coverage of the other two elections analyzed, the Brazilian news articles focused predominantly on horse-race aspects of the campaign and the strategies used by the candidates to gain advantage in the election. However, unlike the other two elections, the Brazilian journalists not only focused on what was happening in the campaign but often also tried to anticipate what would be the candidates' next move and strategy⁷⁰. In this sense, not only was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame extremely salient in the news coverage of the campaign but often the articles were simply interpretative speculation of the journalists that did not offer any relevant, or concrete, information to the electorate. In addition to this, the Issues Frame was considerably less salient, in the Brazilian press, than conflict between political actors.

However, in this regard, the fact that only one of the three main candidates released in advance the electoral program might have contributed to such result. In other words, the low salience of substantive political issues in the Brazilian news coverage of the 2014 general election might have resulted from the *hollow campaigns* conducted by the parties. In fact, the journalists often stated that, for strategic considerations, the Brazilian candidates avoided to discuss and convey their positions on different political issues. For example, the fact that Dilma's electoral bid was sustained by a large coalition of different parties was the main reason why this candidate avoided discussing and offering details about her position on certain issues⁷¹. In one analysis of the candidates' TV spots, the Brazilian press concluded that campaign of the three main candidates was very poor on policy proposals and rich on self-praise⁷².

The remaining frames, with the exception of the Scandal frame, had relatively low salience in the new coverage of the Brazilian election. A very large porportion of news articles dealt with political scandals. The percentage of stories in *Folha* dealing with political scandals was 19.4%. This figure was even higher in *Globo*, where 33.8% of the articles

⁶⁷ Impasse com o PT faz Dilma suspender plano de Governo, *Folha de São Paulo* (18/09/14).

⁶⁸ Aécio lança programa a conta-gotas, *O Globo* (30/09/14).

⁶⁹ Dilma diz que herdeira do Itaú age como banqueira na eleição, *O Globo* (12/09/14).

⁷⁰ Marina se faz de vítima, dizem Dilma e Aécio, *Folha de São Paulo* (12/09/14).

⁷¹ Críticas a ausência e atraso em programas, *O Globo* (01/10/14).

⁷² O primeiro round na TV, *Folha de São Paulo* (12/09/14).

included that Media Frame. In the case of this particular newspaper, there was an higher number of articles dealing with scandals than discussing substantive political issues. To the high salience of this media frame contributed not only some recurring small scandals related to some questionable fundraising or the political use of state organizations in the campaign, but also a huge corruption scandal in the state's oil company Petrobras, whose director had been appointed by the PT government, and that involved several politicians, most of them were also connected to PT.

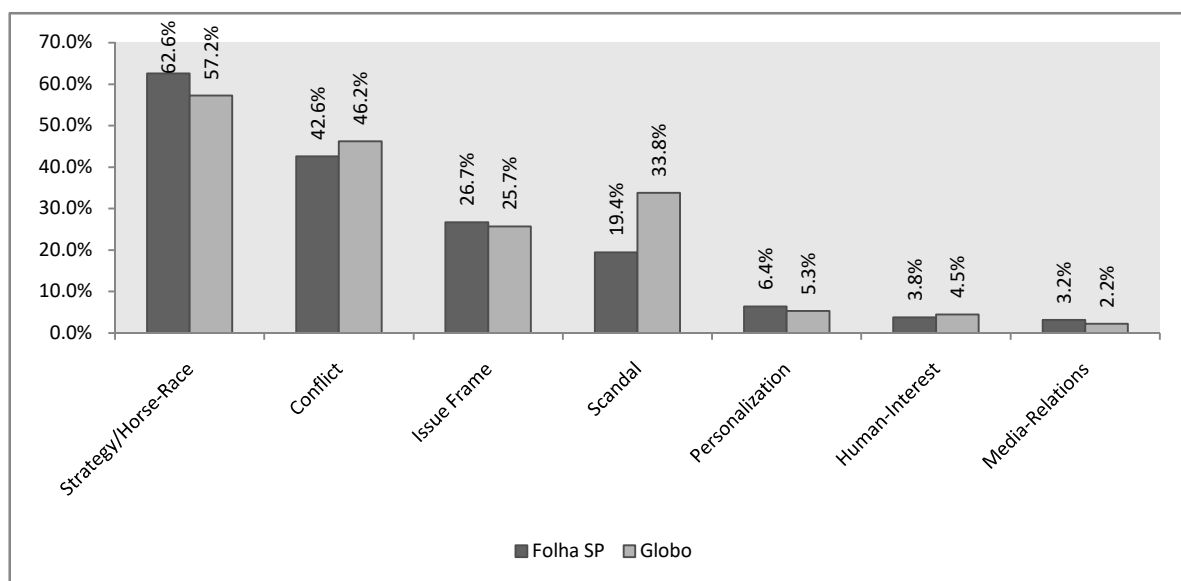


Figure 53 - Frames present in the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

When we look at which were the main/first media frames in the press coverage of the election, the salience of Strategy and Horse-Race aspects becomes even more salient (Figure 54). This aspect was the first frame presented in 45.8% of the stories in Folha and 40.1% of the news articles in Globo. On the other hand, the Conflict Frame becomes considerably less salient in the Brazilian news coverage. In the case of Folha, even though about 43% of the news dealt extensively with conflict between the campaign actors, only 16.8% of this newspaper's articles had conflict as the first and central aspect of the story. Once again, the results show us that conflict is rarely the central aspect in the journalists' news coverage of electoral campaigns.

The analysis of the first frames used by the Brazilian press reveals two other interesting results. The first is that, different from what we saw in the case of the U.S., the salience of conflict remains higher than the salience of substantive political issues. Only 10% of the news articles, in the two newspapers analyzed, were primarily framed in terms of political issues. The second interesting result is that in both newspapers the salience of the

Scandal Frame was higher than the Issues Frame. The difference was, however, more noticeable in the case of Globo. In this newspaper, scandals involving political figures were the first and main aspect discussed in 18.9% of the articles. In the case of Folha, about 12% of the articles had Scandal as the first and main media frame of the story.

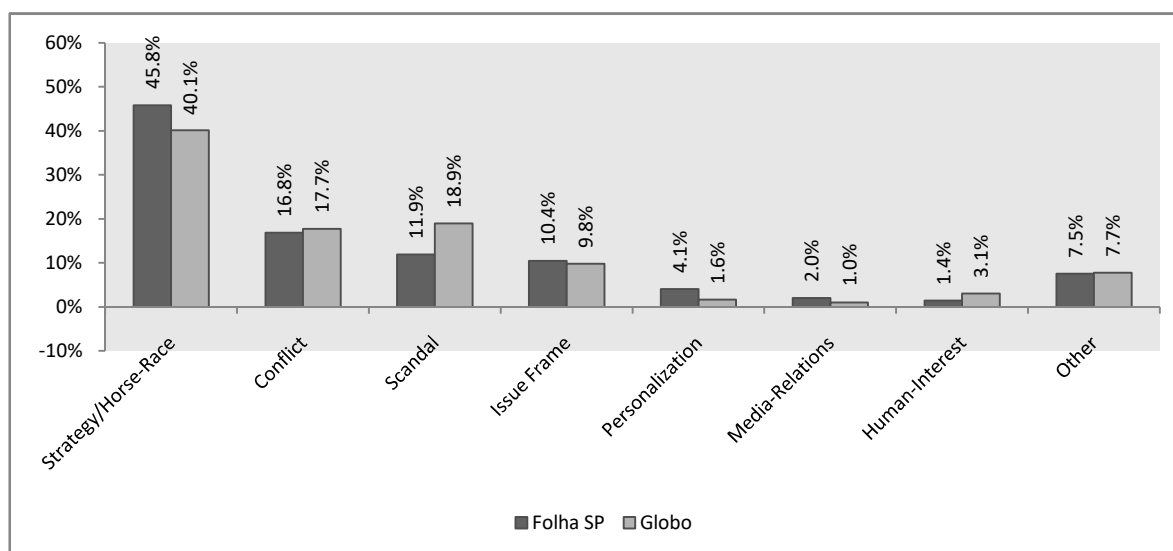


Figure 54 - The main/first frame present in the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

Even though the Issues Frame was not particularly salient in the news coverage of this campaign, it is nevertheless important to look at the type of issues that were prioritized by the Brazilian journalists. As we can see in Figure 55, similarly to what we found in the U.S. case, the category of issues more frequently reported by the Brazilian press was ‘Economy and Work’. These issues clearly dominated the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian election. In both newspapers, about 30% of the articles with the Issues Frame discussed aspects related to Economy and Work. The salience of these issues in the Brazilian press can be partially understood by two different facts. The first one was the delicate economic situation in Brazil in 2014. Seen as one of the most promising emerging economies some years before, the Brazilian economy had stopped growing in 2014. The country was facing high levels of inflation and high, and ramping up, interest rates for its national debt. The second one was that a particular issue, which concerned Marina’s proposal of giving more autonomy to the Brazilian central bank, ended up dominating most of the candidate’s issues’ discussion during the campaign.

The other two most salient categories in the press were Law and Order and Society, Religion and Culture. Nevertheless, when compared to Economy and Work, the salience of these two categories was relatively low. With respect to the remaining categories, the majority

of them were, to some extent, discussed in the news coverage of this election. There were, however, three categories partially, or completely, absent from the news articles about the Brazilian campaign. None of the news articles, in both newspapers, dealt with issues related to immigration. The category of Environmental Protection was absent from news coverage of *Folha*. In contrast, in *Globo*, none of the articles focused on issues related to National Security. However, a relatively high percentage of articles (20.7% for *Folha* and 18.3% for *Globo*) discussed extensively issues belonging to different categories.

Overall, not only the salience of substantive political issues was low in the Brazilian press, but also their variety was relatively low. The Brazilian campaign seemed to have been dominated by a few issues related to the economy and, according to the press, some issues or topics were either neglected by the candidates (e.g. public transport⁷³) or were even a taboo in the campaign. Abortion was one of these issues considered taboo for the candidates⁷⁴, with Dilma even refusing to answer a question about it in the last debate⁷⁵.

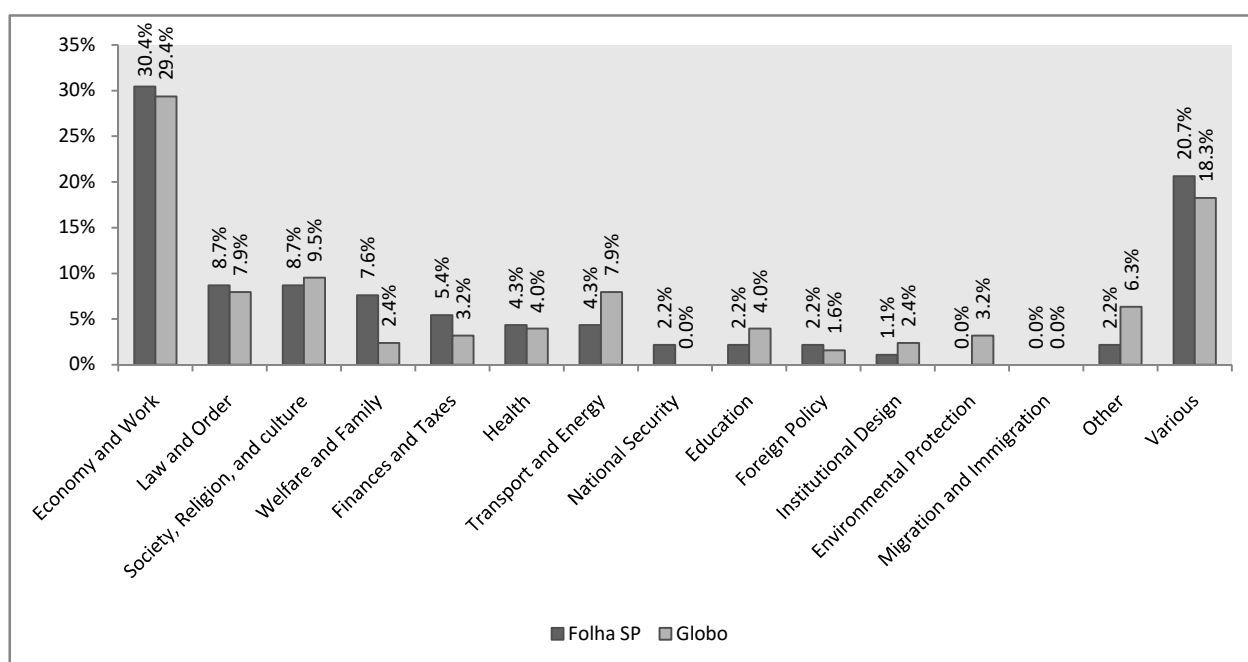


Figure 55 - Nature of the political issues present in the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

Regarding the sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race used by the press, the most salient aspect in both newspapers were those relating to the candidates campaign strategies. As we can see in Figure 56, about 39% of the articles in *Folha* and 43% in *Globo* included the Strategy sub-Frame. In these newspapers, a large number of those stories dealt with the

⁷³ Não é por R\$0,20, *Folha de São Paulo* (23/09/13).

⁷⁴ Tabu nas campanhas, *O Globo* (19/09/13).

⁷⁵ Em debate, candidatos criticam escandalos (03/10/13).

strategies of Aécio and Dilma to reduce the share of voting intention in support of Marina, or simply addressed what the candidates' rallies and TV commercials looked like.

A relatively high percentage of news articles also dealt with the situation of the race and its possible outcomes. A total of 31% of the stories in *Folha*, and 23.2% in *Globo*, focused on opinion polls and the candidates' situation in the race. In *Folha*, where this frame was more salient, about 14% of the news pieces included opinion polls. Even though opinion polls were frequently presented and discussed in the news coverage of this election, all of those polls completely failed to offer a good indication about the outcome of the election. This election was an extreme example of both polls and political analysts being completely wrong. More concerning, however, is the fact that a few days before election day, a considerable proportion of the electorate did not know how to vote, since the electronic voting system in Brazil requires voters to know a candidate's unique number, for their favorite candidate⁷⁶. More than half of Marina's electorate did not know how to vote for her.

Aspects related to turnout and voting in general, such as the appeals of candidates to vote for them were discussed in very few stories (3.2% in the case of *Folha*, and 4.3% in the case of *Globo*). The fact that Brazil has compulsory voting might have contributed to the low salience of this aspect since, different from the U.S., the Brazilian candidates do not need to make huge campaign efforts to mobilize their own electorate.

Finally, one interesting aspect of the news coverage of this election was that, similar to what happened in Italy, the press often discussed how opinion polls impact the markets. While in Italy, the growth in voting intention for Berlusconi was reported as having a negative effect in the Italian stock market, in the case of Brazil, it was Dilma's probable re-election that was concerning international investors the most.

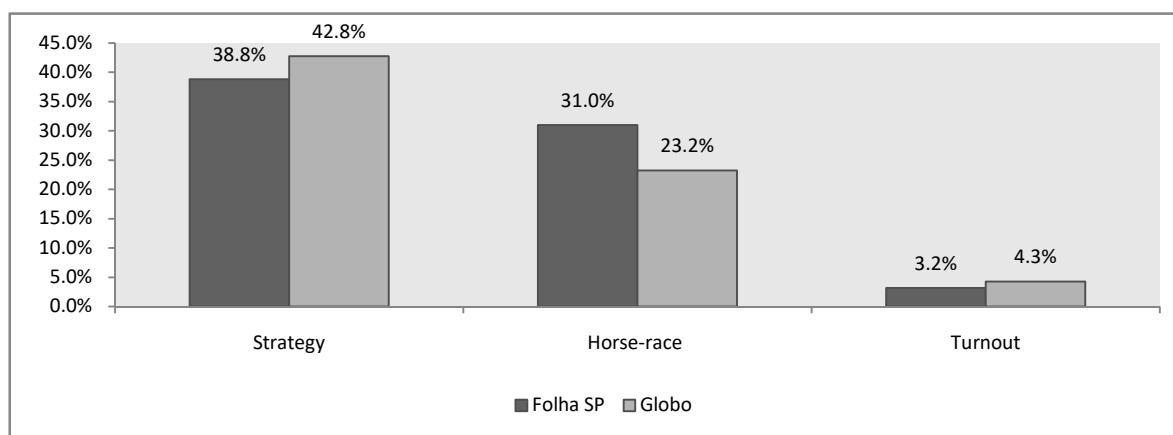


Figure 56 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

⁷⁶ Chance de 2º turno é cada vez maior, *Folha de São Paulo* (01/10/13).

As we saw already, the Conflict Frame was a relatively salient aspect in the news coverage of the Brazilian election, with it being present in more than 40% of newspaper articles analyzed. Regarding the type of conflict, the majority of attacks present in the news coverage made by the press of the Brazilian election centered on the candidates' personal characteristics and values (Figure 57). This was more salient in the articles of *Folha de São Paulo*, where 62% focused on traits and values of the political actors. In *Globo*, slightly more than half of the attacks shown also involved traits and values. A relatively small proportion of the attacks (20% in *Folha de São Paulo* and 18% in *Globo*) targeted the political issues of the Brazilian candidates.

The fact that the political issues were not very frequently discussed in the campaign, with some of the main candidates not even presenting their electoral programs, might have contributed to this result. Even though 70% of the electorate disapproved of the attacks between the candidates⁷⁷, conflict dominated the Brazilian presidential campaign of 2014. According to the journalists and analysts, the Brazilian candidates, particularly Dilma, often relied on conflict to gain advantage in the campaign. However, differently from the U.S., where negative campaigning is used mostly to dissuade the opponent's electorate, in the case of Brazil, where voting is compulsory, the Conflict Frame is used by the candidates primarily to persuade the undecided voters.

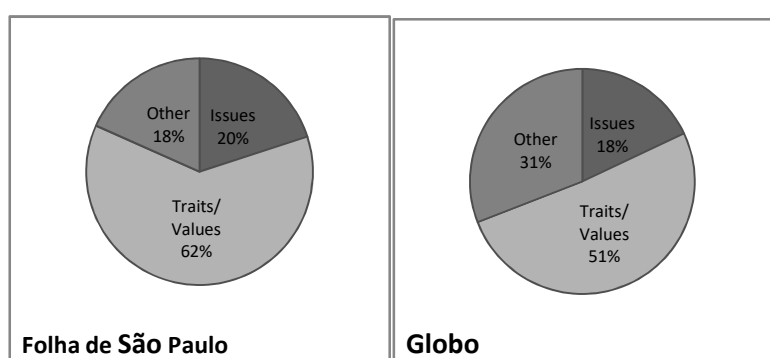


Figure 57 - Type of conflict present in the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

Overall, the Brazilian news coverage of the 2014 presidential election was mainly framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race. In addition to this, when we look at the main frames present in each news article, both the Conflict and Scandal Frames were more salient than substantive political issues during this campaign. However, several articles from the press, as

⁷⁷ Campanhas manterão ataques, *O Globo* (25.09.14).

well as the fact that only one of the main candidates released an electoral program, suggest that the lack of issues in the news coverage resulted from uninformative campaigns conducted by the parties. The next three sections in this chapter analyze the campaigns conducted by the three main Brazilian candidates on social media.

6.2 – *Dilma's campaign on the SNS.*

The Internet, particularly the SNS, played an important role in the campaign of the Brazilian incumbent candidate. During the campaign, Dilma indicated that she was conducting a 2.0 campaign and that her policy proposals would be conveyed and discussed through the SNS. In addition to this, Dilma's campaign also tried to recruit prominent social media users (generators of campaign content) to increase her visibility on cyberspace⁷⁸ and support her campaign.

As we saw in the previous section of this chapter, the Brazilian press often highlighted the fact that one of the main strategies of the president Dilma in this election was a negative campaign mainly aimed towards Marina Silva. The Brazilian citizens also perceived Dilma as the candidate that conducted the most negative campaign⁷⁹. It is interesting, however, to see that this situation was not at all reflected in Dilma's campaign on the SNS. When we look at the frames used in the online campaign of Dilma (Figure 58), the salience of conflict was in general very low. The Conflict Frame was only the third most salient aspect in the online campaign of Dilma being more frequently used in this candidate's Facebook messages. Nevertheless, only 20% of the Facebook items included the Conflict Frame. This figure was much smaller in the case of the other two SNS, with conflict between politicians being present in only 11% of the items.

On the Internet, Dilma mostly framed her messages in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race. This media frame was the most salient aspect in two of the SNS analyzed, Twitter and YouTube. On Twitter, exactly 60% of the posts were framed in terms of strategy and horse-race, while on YouTube this media frame was included in 51.3% of the videos. However, on Facebook the Issues Frame (54%) was slightly more salient than the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame (47.5%).

Even though the Issues Frame was relatively salient in Dilma's Facebook campaign, the same cannot be said about the other two platforms. On YouTube, only 36% of the videos

⁷⁸ Cronica de uma campanha, *O Globo* (04.20.14).

⁷⁹ Campanhas manterão ataques, *O Globo* (25.09.14).

dealt extensively with substantive political issues, while on Twitter the proportion of items that included this frame was even smaller (25%). Overall, these results suggest that not only was the social media campaign of Dilma not particularly informative to the electorate (even though it was apparently the only channel where this candidate conveyed her proposals) but also Dilma used different social media for different purposes.

The salience of the remaining media frames was relatively low with the exception of the Human-Interest Frame that was almost as salient as the Conflict Frame. These were mainly self-praise posts focused on how Dilma's government had positively changed the lives of ordinary citizens and how grateful those citizens were to the president. It is also interesting to note that even though political scandals were so salient in the press, this aspect was practically absent in Dilma's online campaign. This frame was included in only 2.9% of the Facebook posts and it was absent from the campaign made in the other two SNS. Also practically none of the social media posts included the Media-Relations Frame.

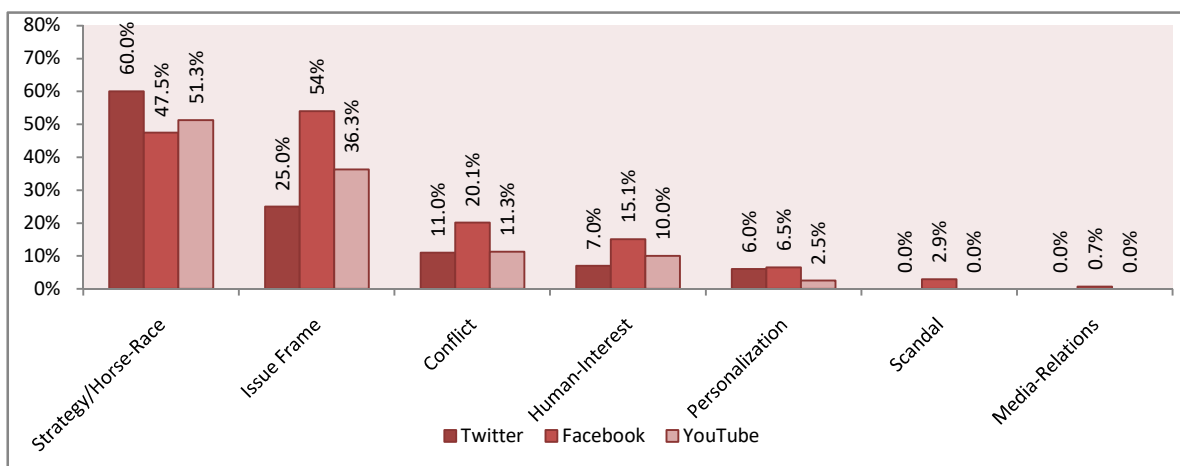


Figure 58 - Frames salience in Dilma's SNS campaign.

When we look at the first frames used in Dilma's online campaign the scenario remains mostly the same (Figure 59). In the case of Twitter and YouTube the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame continues to be the most salient aspect. This media frame was the primary aspect of 60% of Twitter items and 45% of YouTube videos. In Facebook the Issues Frame loses some importance, becoming as salient as the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. Even though more than half of the Facebook messages discussed substantive political issues, this media frame was only the primary aspect of about 40% of the Facebook items. The same can also be said about the Conflict Frame that was only the primary aspect of half of the messages that included this aspect.

Overall, the frame analysis of the social media campaign of Dilma suggests two things. The first point is that the campaign was not particularly informative to the electorate. The Issues Frame was only relatively salient in the Facebook campaign of this candidate. However, on this platform, considerations about strategy and horse-race were equally salient. We cannot therefore say that conveying and discussing substantive political issues was a major concern in the online campaign of Dilma, even though, as we saw, the electorate perceived this campaign as the most informative of the three main candidates. The second point is that conflict was not, at all, salient in the online campaign of Dilma, contrary to what was suggested by the press and perceived by the citizens. In this regard there was also a clearly concern of this candidate to not engage in a very negative campaign since, on the second turn, the endorsement of the third most voted candidate could be crucial for the president's chances of re-election. Indeed, for this reason, after the first electoral round, Dilma's campaign deleted all of the videos attacking Marina Silva from social media.

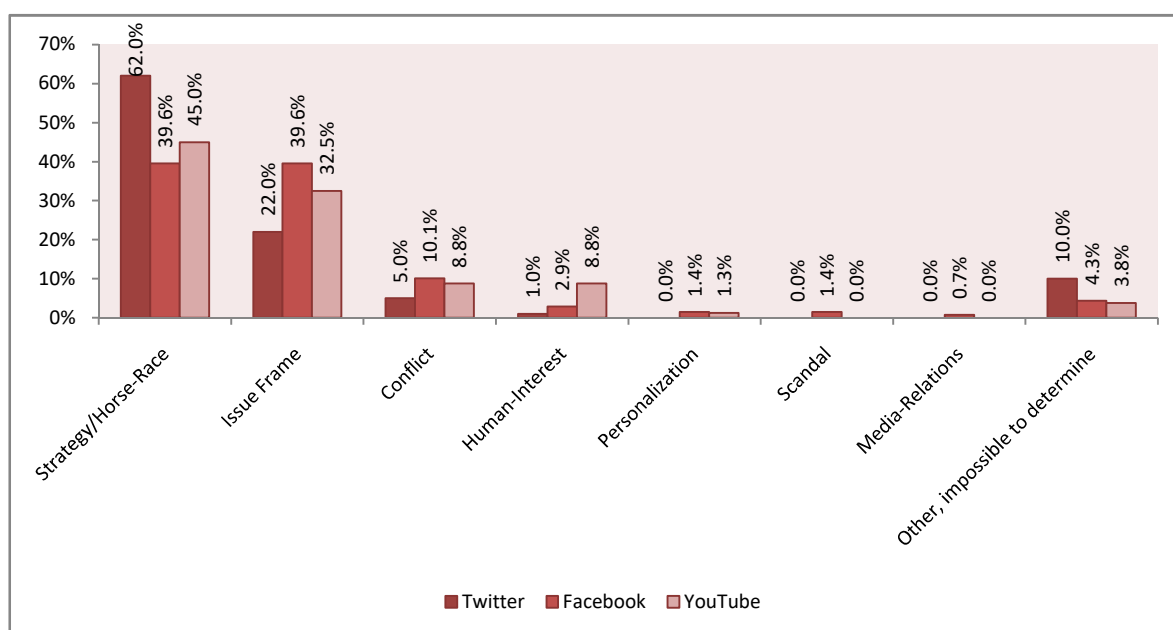


Figure 59 – First/main frame salience in Dilma's SNS campaign.

When we look at the nature of the issues that were discussed in Dilma's campaign, contrary to what we saw in the press where Economy and Work dominated the discussion, there were four categories that received relatively high salience, particularly in the case of Twitter and Facebook (Figure 60). These four categories were Law and Order, Economy and Work, Welfare and Family and Education. Most of these messages focused on the achievements of Dilma's government in those areas and what should and could be done in the next four years.

On the other hand, there were five categories that were not present in any of the three platforms (Finances and Taxes, Migration and Immigration, National Security, Institutional Design and Foreign Policy). However, a relatively high amount of posts and videos, on all three SNS dealt with more than one category of issues at the same time. Overall, even though Dilma's campaign, in terms of the nature of the issues discussed, was not dominated by one particularly category, we cannot say that this campaign was particularly diverse and informative since a large number of topics were completely absent from the candidate's online campaign. In other words, not only was the salience of the Issues Frame low, but also the range of issues discussed in this campaign was relatively limited.

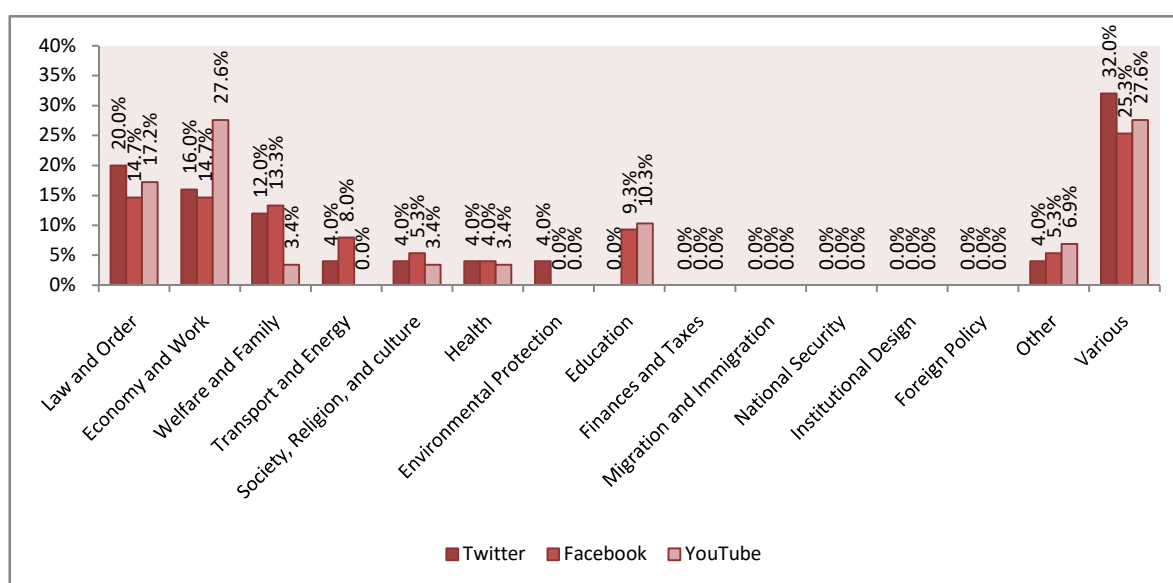


Figure 60- Nature of issues in Dilma's SNS campaign.

We already saw that a high percentage of messages in Dilma's online campaign were framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. When we look at which aspects of this frame were more salient, we can see some sharp differences between the three SNS (Figure 61). In the case of Twitter the posts were mainly about the Strategy aspect and the way the candidate was campaigning (43%). These posts included messages about the candidate agenda, where and with whom she was campaigning, in what kind of events she participated and what those events looked like. Strategy was also the most salient sub-aspect in the Facebook campaign, being present in 19.4% of the messages conveyed on this platform. Differently, the salience of Strategy aspects was very low in YouTube videos.

On YouTube, however, the reason for the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame resulted almost exclusively from videos that simply showed artists and public figures endorsing Dilma. Almost half of Dilma's YouTube videos focused on endorsements made by

Brazilian artists and public figures (42.5%). In fact, it was even noted and reported by the media the competition between the Brazilian presidential candidates to receive the endorsement of the different Brazilian artists⁸⁰.

The Horse-Race sub-frame, an aspect that was relatively salient in the press coverage of this election, was in very few occasions included in Dilma's online messages. Only 2% of the Twitter items and 4.3% of the Facebook messages included the Horse-Race sub-Frame. In the case of YouTube, none of the videos dealt with this particular aspect.

The Turnout sub-Frame was relatively salient on Facebook, appearing in 13.7% of the messages, being, after the Strategy, the second most salient sub-aspect of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame on this particular platform. On the other two platforms, this aspect was only present in 5% of the items analyzed.

With respect to the remaining aspects, their salience was, as expected, relatively low on all three platforms. None of Dilma's social media messages focused on opportunities to donate money to the campaign. Some of the Twitter and Facebook posts (4% and 5.8%, respectively) asked citizens to volunteer or help this candidate's campaign. Finally, only Twitter included posts, four to be more precise, that gave citizens, through live streaming videos, the opportunity to experience online the campaign events of this candidate.

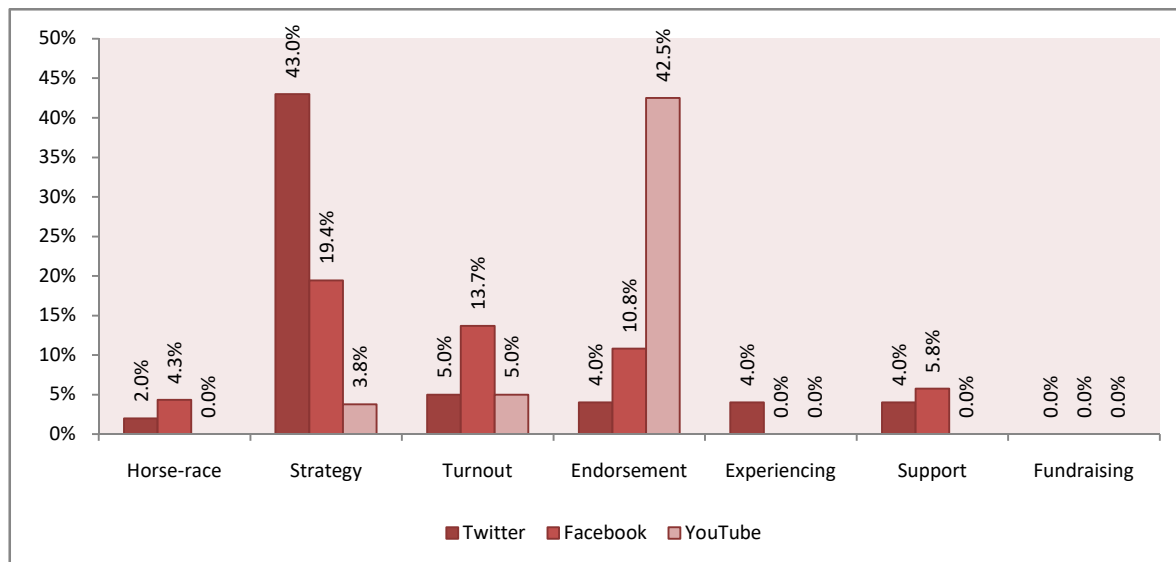


Figure 61- Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in Dilma's SNS campaign.

Another interesting difference between the press news coverage of the election and Dilma's online campaign was related to the type of conflict that was used in her online attacks on her opponents. While in the press, the majority of attacks were connected to the personal traits and values of the other candidates, in this online campaign Dilma's attacks mainly

⁸⁰ Rivaís convocam artistas e disputam 'estrelas', *Folha de São Paulo* (13/09/14).

related to political issues, at least in the Twitter and Facebook campaigns (Figure 62). If Dilma's main campaign strategy, as the press often stated⁸¹, was to attack Marina Silva, then these results suggest that Dilma's mainly criticized or challenged the policy proposals of her opponent. On both Facebook and Twitter, the percentage of attacks aiming at political issues was 64%. In the case of YouTube, there was a higher proportion of attacks targeting the opponent's traits and values. However, the number of YouTube videos of Dilma that included the Conflict Frame was relatively small. For this reason, the other two SNS offer a slightly more accurate picture of the type of conflict shown in the campaign of the Brazilian incumbent candidate.

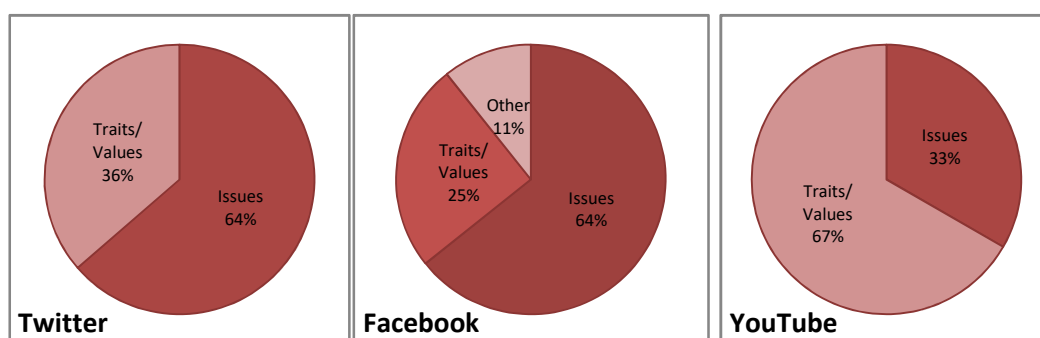


Figure 62 - Type of attack in Dilma's SNS campaign.

Regarding the additional information included in the Twitter and Facebook messages, the most frequent type of extra content in Dilma's online campaign was, on both platforms, the video (Figure 63). On Facebook, slightly more than half of Dilma's posts included a video. In the case of Twitter, videos were included in 27.8% of the posts. In an electoral campaign where selfies became extremely popular among all candidates, a picture or image was the second most common type of additional content in the Twitter posts of Dilma. A total of 24.7% of the Twitter posts also included images, while in Facebook this type of content was present in about 17% of the items analyzed. A relatively high amount of posts, particularly on Facebook (18.7%), also included articles from non-journalistic sources. These were mainly articles published in the main campaign website. Finally, none of the platforms included articles that originally came from the press and only Twitter had some messages that included Internet links to live streaming videos.

⁸¹ Agressividade pode se voltar contra Dilma, *Folha de São Paulo* (12/09/14).

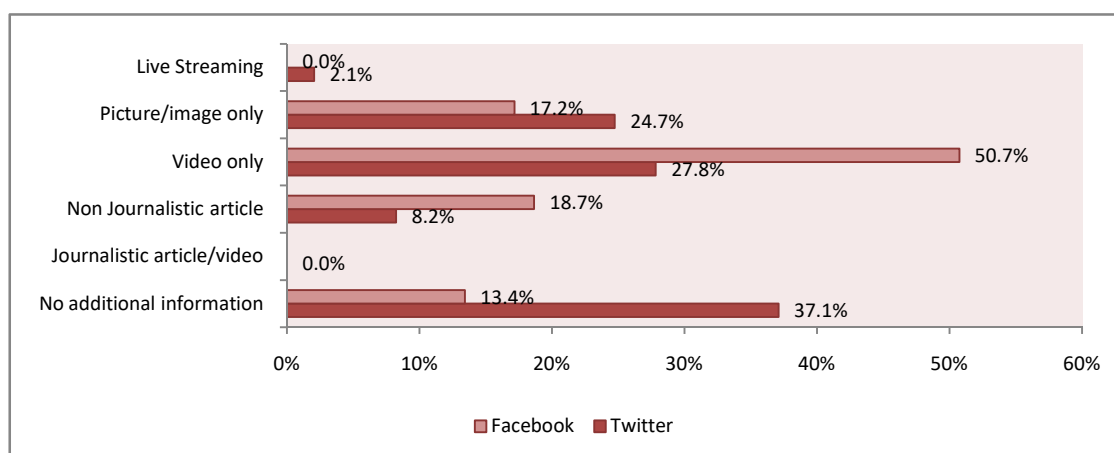


Figure 63 - Additional content also included in Dilma's Facebook/Twitter posts.

6.3 – Aécio Neves's campaign on the SNS.

Aécio Neves was the second most voted candidate in the 2014 Brazilian election, even though every single opinion poll published in the last four-weeks before election day placed him in third place, behind Marina Silva. To some extent, particularly in relation to two aspects, this candidate conducted a campaign similar to Dilma's campaign. On the one hand, Marina was also the main opponent, and target of his criticism and attacks, of Aécio. On the other hand, Aécio also mostly campaigned without offering the electorate a concrete government plan or document with proposals on different political issues. Only in the last week of the campaign did this candidate offer the electorate a very generic set of guidelines to be pursued by his government.

Social media had an important role in the presidential campaign of this candidate. Since a concrete campaign document with this candidate's issue proposals did not exist, the Internet was one of the main channels for Aécio to discuss and convey political issues which was similar to Dilma's campaign. Aécio actively seek to interact, particularly through Facebook, with the voters during his campaign. For example, this candidate used Facebook to answer some of the questions raised by Facebook users. In general, Aécio used social media, particularly Facebook, to appear closer to the electorate by posting, for example, campaign videos recorded by himself with his mobile phone⁸².

With respect to the frames used by Aécio in his online campaign, the most salient aspect, which was similar to Dilma's campaign, was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame (Figure 64). This media frame was the most frequently included aspect in all three social media. In the

⁸² Três em cinco eleitores brasileiros estão nas redes, *O Globo* (16/09/14).

case of Facebook, where this frame was more salient, it was included in 66.7% of the messages. On Twitter the salience of this aspect was lower, being nevertheless included in about 45% of the posts. In the case of YouTube, around 57% of the videos dealt with strategy and horse-race considerations. Overall, Aécio gave priority, in its online messages, to the discussion of aspects related to strategy, mainly how the candidate was conducting his campaign, where the candidate had been and what the different campaign events looked like.

Even though it was the second most frequent frame, the salience of substantive political issues was relatively low in Aécio's online campaign, especially in the case of Twitter, where in only 26.1% of the messages included political issues. Similar to Dilma, Aécio also mostly used YouTube to convey political issues to the electorate. On this platform, about 46% of the videos included the Issues Frame. On Facebook, only 33.3% of the items dealt extensively with substantive political issues.

Even though the Conflict Frame was also only the third most salient aspect in this online campaign, the salience of this aspect, when compared to Dilma's campaign, was nevertheless higher. This frame was more salient on YouTube where 30.1% of the videos shown had some sort of criticism of or mounted attacks against other campaign actors. On Twitter the Conflict Frame was present in 21.4% of the messages while on Facebook this frame was present in 24% of the items.

Different from Dilma's online campaign, a considerable number of online messages of Aécio focused on political scandals. This aspect was particularly salient on YouTube, being discussed in 13.3% of the videos analyzed. Also on YouTube, about 11% of the content coded dealt with the Human-Interest Frame. These were mainly self-praise videos about the achievements of this candidate as governor of Minas Gerais, and how his local government had had a positive impact on the lives of citizens from this region.

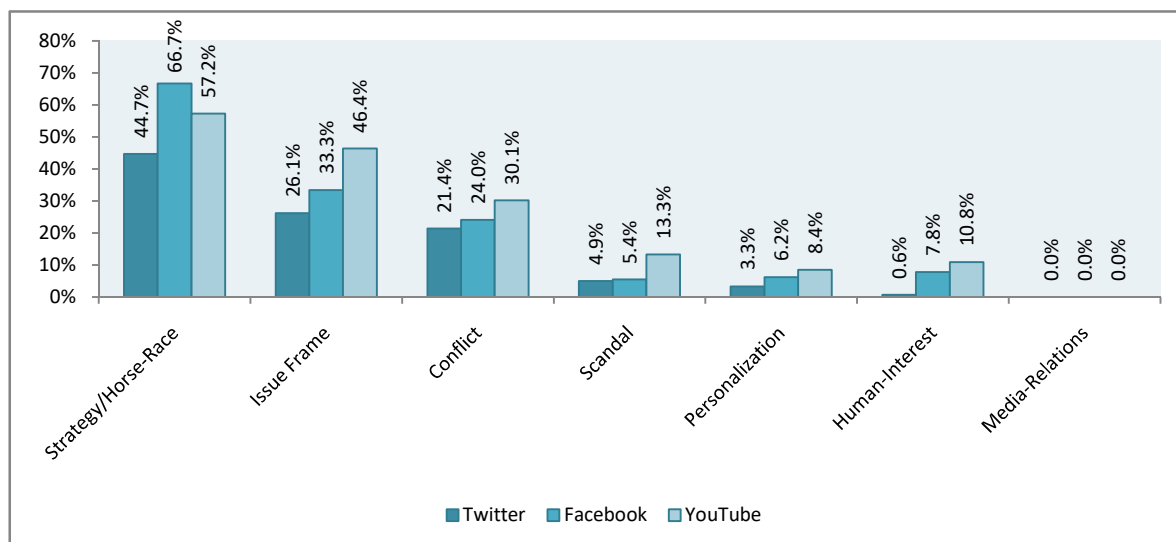


Figure 64 - Frames salience in Aécio's SNS campaign.

Overall and similar to Dilma's online messages, the results suggest that the social media campaign of Aécio was not particularly informative to the electorate. Furthermore, even though the Issues Frame was somehow salient in YouTube videos of this candidate, those videos often also included other aspects such as Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and even Scandal.

When we look at the first/main media frames of this campaign, the picture remains mostly the same (Figure 65). The most salient aspect continues to be the Strategy/Horse-Race on all three SNS, followed by the Issues and Conflict Frames. On Facebook, almost 60% of the messages were primarily framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race. This means that when a Facebook post included this frame, that frame was almost always the first and main aspect discussed in the message. On Twitter, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the main aspect presented in about 44% of the messages while, on YouTube, 34% of the videos were primarily framed in terms of this aspect.

The results also show that, on YouTube, even though 46% of the videos included the Issues Frame, only 28.3% of the videos had substantive political issues as the primary aspect conveyed in the message. The salience of this frame on the other two platforms was lower. On Twitter, only 20% of the posts were primarily framed in terms of Issues, while on Facebook, the proportion of items having this frame as the first aspect conveyed in them was even smaller (18.6%).

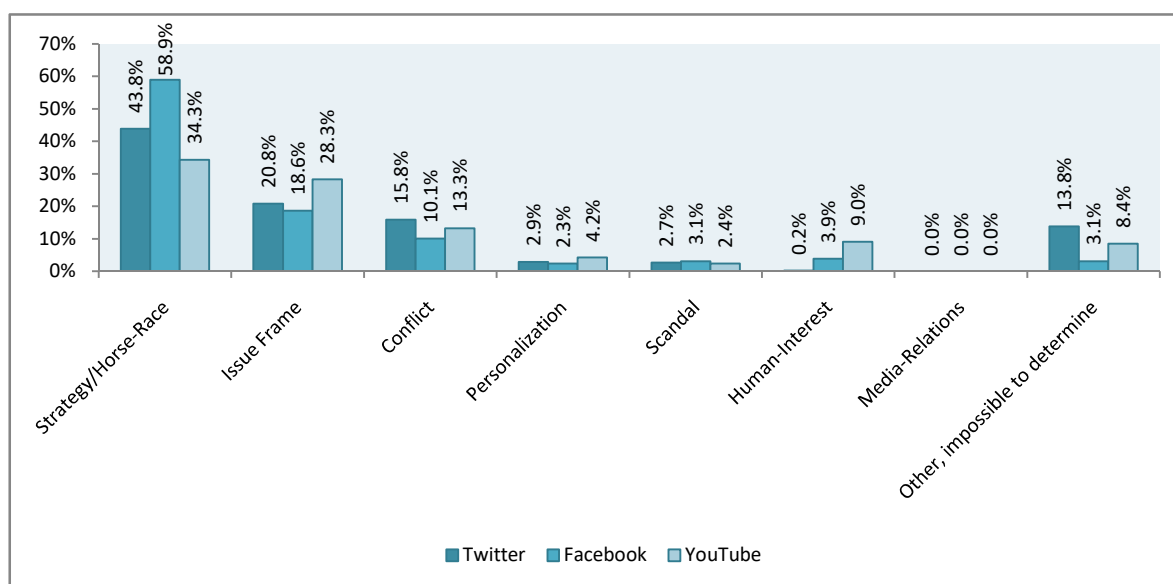


Figure 65 - First/main frame salience in Aécio's SNS campaign.

Very few items were primarily framed in terms of Conflict. This aspect was nevertheless more salient on Twitter where 15.8% of the messages had the primary purpose of attacking or criticizing the opponent. Conversely, on Facebook this aspect was less often the first/main aspect conveyed in the messages (10.1%). With respect to the remaining media frames, their salience was in general low in the online campaign of this candidate.

In terms of the nature of the issues, a relatively broad range of categories were addressed by this candidate in his online campaign (Figure 66). The only category of issues that was not discussed on any of the three SNS was Migration and Immigration. There were also some differences between the different SNS regarding the nature of the issues that were addressed. On YouTube and Twitter, the most salient issue was Economy and Work, while on Facebook, the most salient topic was Welfare and Family. Other categories such as Law and Order, Education and Health were also particularly salient in the online campaign of this candidate, of the three SNS analyzed. The salience of Education and Health resulted mostly from this candidate's focus on his achievements as Governor of Minas Gerais since these were two areas with acknowledged and praised results in some of the Brazilian rankings.

Finally, some categories were also absent from some of the SNS analyzed. None of the YouTube and Facebook posts dealt with issues related to National Security, Institutional Design and Environmental Protection. Issues related to Finances and Taxes were only absent in the Facebook campaign. Contrarily to what we saw for Dilma, the online campaign of Aécio, when it comes to its discussion of substantive political issues, was not dominated by one particular category.

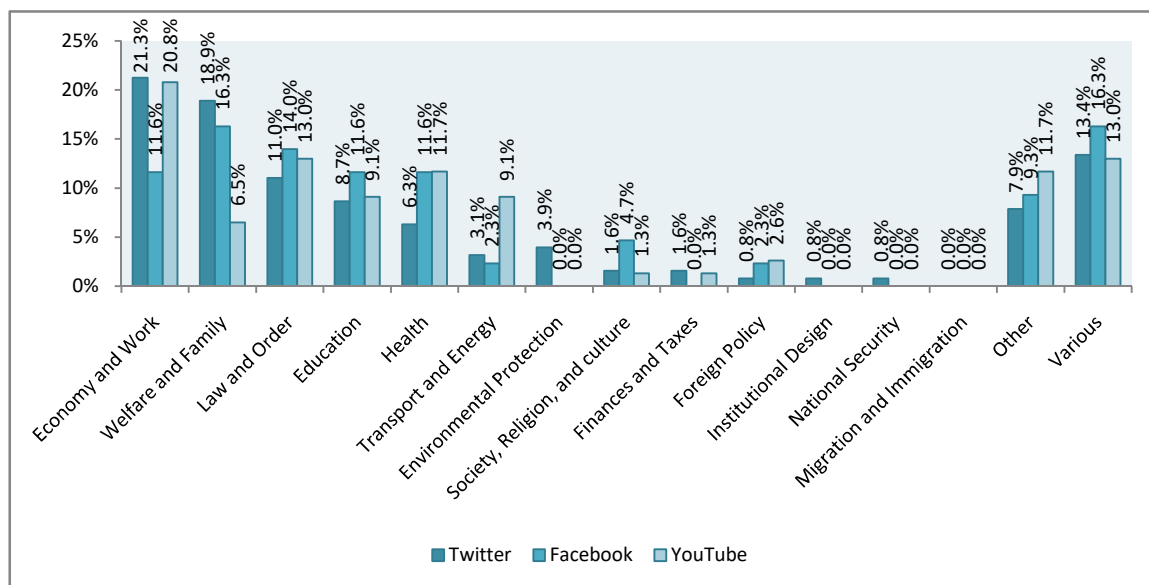


Figure 66 - Nature of issues in Aécio's SNS campaign.

Regarding which specific aspects of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame were more frequently presented in this candidate's campaign, the results show us that Strategy considerations were the most sub-aspect on all three platforms (Figure 67). This aspect was particularly salient on Facebook, where 38% of the posts included this sub-Frame. On Twitter and YouTube, about 30% and 19.3% of the items analyzed, respectively, dealt with this aspect.

There are, however, three interesting differences when we compare these results to the results observed in Dilma's campaign. The first difference is that Aécio gave more visibility to the Horse-Race aspect of the election. This is mainly related to the fact that Aécio was the only candidate that was consistently growing in the opinion polls in the last four weeks of the campaign. The second difference is that a considerable amount of this candidate's messages on Facebook and YouTube dealt with Turnout aspects. This is mainly related to this candidate's effort to discourage the electorate that did not want Dilma to be re-elected from casting a utility vote for Marina, who was placed second in the polls at the time. The third, and final, difference was the lower salience that the Endorsement Frame had in the online campaign of this candidate. On YouTube only 18.1% of the videos showed an artist or public figure supporting him.

With respect to the remaining aspects, while Twitter was the only platform used to offer the public the opportunity to experience this campaign, Facebook was the platform more frequently used to ask supporters to help the campaign. Again, none of the messages analyzed dealt with money donations for the campaign.

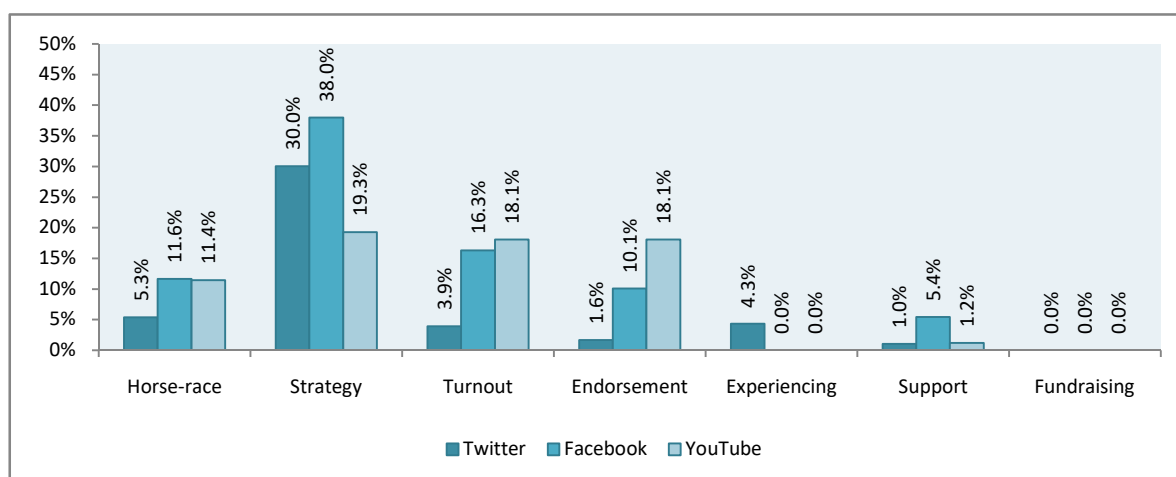


Figure 67 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in Aécio's SNS campaign.

With respect to the type of conflict in Aécio's online campaign, the attacks were mainly aimed at the opponents' personal traits and values, which differs to what we saw in Dilma's online campaign (Figure 68). On YouTube the percentage of trait and values attacks was the highest (62%) while on Twitter and Facebook this percentage was comparatively lower (44% and 48% respectively). On Facebook the proportion of attacks aimed at the opponents' issues was higher (45%), even though on YouTube the Issues Frame was more salient overall.

There are two factors that might explain why there was a higher proportion of traits and values' attacks in Aécio's online campaign. The first factor, as we saw, is that only Marina presented a detailed government program during the campaign and the main proposals of that program, particularly in the area of economy, were mostly in line with Aécio's political preferences. For this reason, Aécio mainly criticized Marina's untrustworthiness (since she changed, during the campaign, some of the points in her program) rather than the concrete policy proposals presented in the actual document. The second one is that Aécio, according to the Brazilian press, used the scandals involving PT and Dilma to recover his second place in the polls⁸³. For this reason, Aécio campaign mainly attacked and criticized the president's character and competence rather than her policy preferences and proposals.

⁸³ Para especialistas, 'efeito Marina' deve acelerar reações de petistas e tucanos, *O Globo* (27/08/2014).

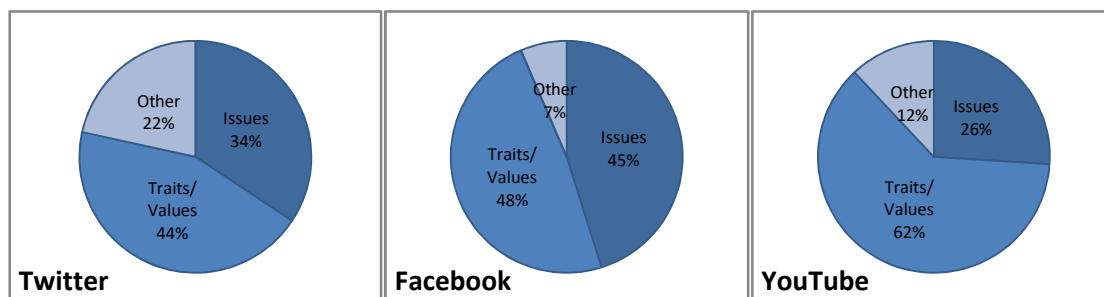


Figure 68 - Type of attack in Aécio's online campaign.

Finally, regarding the additional information included on Facebook and Twitter, there were some noticeable differences between the two platforms (Figure 69). In the case of Facebook, when the messages had any additional information it was most of time (34.1%) a video. The remaining Facebook messages included mostly pictures (27.1%) or non-journalistic articles (20.9%).

On Twitter, on the other hand, this campaign included mostly pictures and images (38.1%). On this SNS, however, a relatively high proportion of messages (41.4%) did not include any additional content besides the simple 140 characters message. Besides pictures, the Twitter messages with additional content included mostly videos (9.3%) or non-journalistic articles (7.9%). It is also interesting to note that Aécio also included on both SNS, even though to a much negligible extent, some posts with articles that originally came from the traditional media.

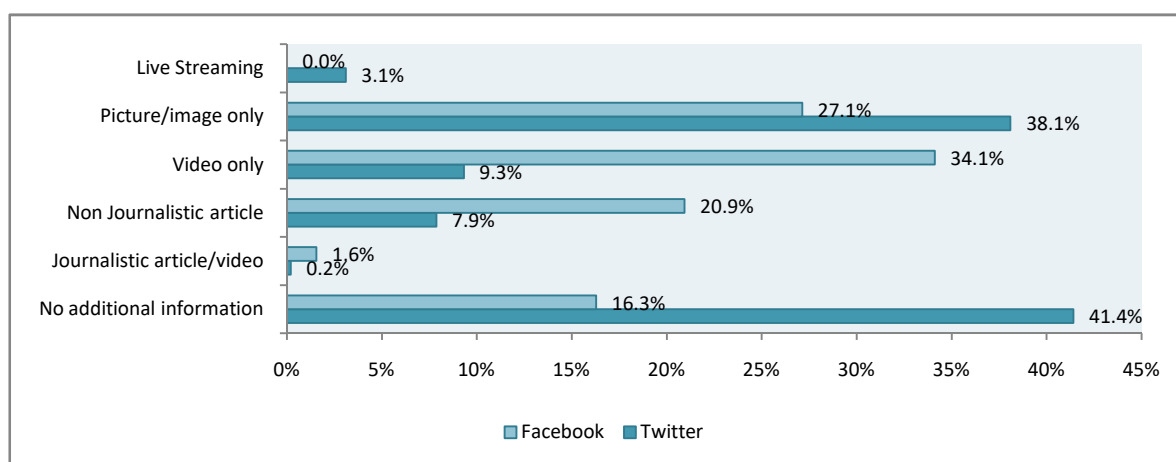


Figure 69 - Additional content also included in Aécio's Facebook/Twitter posts.

6.4 – Marina Silva's campaign on the SNS.

Marina Silva was the third most voted candidate in the first round of the 2014 Brazilian election. Marina, who was seen as the most likely candidate to pass to the second

electoral round with Dilma, conducted an active campaign on social media, particularly during the last weeks of the campaign. Marina often expressed the importance of the Internet and frequently challenged her supporters to help her social media campaign. This focus on the Internet was apparently done to compensate for the lack of resources or a strong party backing her campaign and having less campaign time on TV, compared to the other two main candidates⁸⁴. Marina's campaign was, by far, the most active one on Twitter, posting on average 31 messages per day, during the last four weeks of the campaign. In addition to this, similarly to Aécio, Marina also used Facebook to engage in dialogic communication with the electorate in "face to face" initiatives.

Regarding the media frames used in Marina's online campaign, the most salient aspect in all of the three SNS analyzed was again the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame (Figure 70). In the case of Facebook and YouTube, the salience of this aspect was particularly high, being used, respectively, in 64.2% and 63.1% of the items analyzed. On Twitter, this frame was comparatively less frequently used. Only 45.1% of the Twitter messages dealt with strategy and horse-race aspects.

The second most salient media frame in all three platforms was again the Issues Frame. Differently from the other two elections already analyzed, it is interesting to see that none of the Brazilian candidates' social media campaigns had the Issues Frame as the most frequently discussed topic. Even in Marina's campaign, the only Brazilian candidate with an electoral program, the Issues Frame was less salient, on all of the three SNS, than Strategy/Horse-Race. On Twitter and Facebook, the Issues Frame was included, respectively, in 30.2% and 36.6% of the content. It was in Marina's YouTube campaign that this aspect was more salient. Almost 46% of the videos on this platform dealt extensively with substantive political issues. However, it was also on this platform that conflict between political actors was more salient, being present in 31.1% of the campaign videos analyzed. Comparatively, only 15.5% of the Twitter posts and 14.6% of the Facebook messages dealt with conflict between political actors. Marina often stated in her online messages that, different from the other candidates, she would pursue a positive campaign and not attack her opponents.

Overall, the results suggest that Marina relied mostly on video format content to convey and discuss political issues during the campaign. It is, however, also interesting to see that the Personalization Frame was the fourth most salient frame on Twitter. On Facebook,

⁸⁴ 24 horas decisivas, *O Globo* (04/10/14).

where this aspect was more salient, exactly 13% of the messages included this aspect. This mainly resulted from the fact that Marina's personal history (poor family, late alphabetization and the fight for environmental causes) was often addressed and discussed in her campaign messages. This fact also explains, to some extent, the relatively high salience of the Human-Interest aspect in Marina's online campaign, where the messages often tried to appeal to the audience's emotions. Other reason for the salience of this frame was the frequent references to Eduardo Campos and messages from his family, Marina's running-mate and presidential candidate that died in an airplane accident during this campaign.

Finally, similarly to the online campaign of Aécio, also a considerable number of online messages dealt with political scandals. Since the main political scandals discussed during the campaign were mainly related to Dilma and PT, it is not surprising that the salience of this media frame was considerably higher in the online campaigns of Marina and Aécio, even though there were also some scandals, brought up during the campaign, which involved indirectly and directly these two candidates. None of the social media messages of Marina included the Media-Relations Frame.

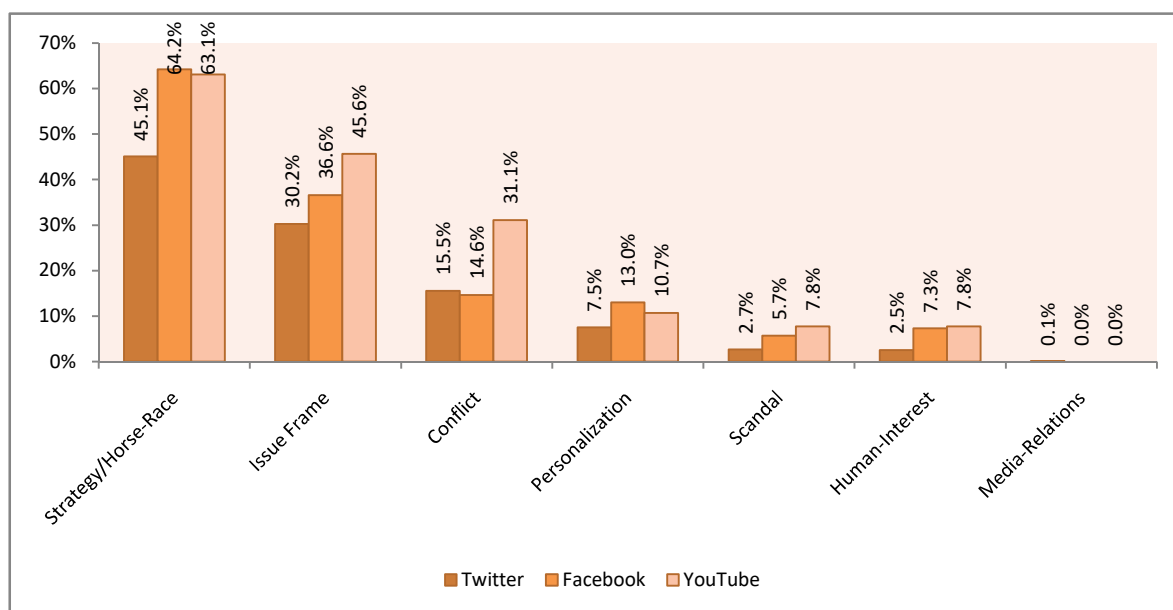


Figure 70 - Frames salience in Marina's SNS campaign.

When we look at the first/main frames, the overall picture of Marina's online campaign remains mostly the same (Figure 71). In all of the three SNS analyzed, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the aspect more frequently conveyed as the first/main topic of the messages. However, when only looking at the first media frames of each message, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame becomes relatively more salient on Facebook (58.5%) than on YouTube (48.7%). In other words, even though this frame was, overall, equally salient on

those two SNS, this aspect was more frequently the primary aspect of the messages on Facebook. In the case of Twitter, about 40% of the items analyzed had the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame as the first and main aspect of the messages.

The second most salient aspect, again on all three platforms, was the Issues Frame. On YouTube the discussion of substantive political issues was more frequently the primary aspect of the campaign content. The Issues Frame was the main/first aspect conveyed in 32% of the YouTube videos. Comparatively, on Twitter and Facebook, only 25.5% and 20.3% of the messages had the discussion and conveyance of political issues as their primary goal. Similarly to the Issues Frame, also the Conflict Frame was not very often the primary aspect in Marina's online campaign. On YouTube this aspect was more frequently the main/first frame of the messages (14.6%). On Twitter and Facebook, the proportion of messages that had conflict as its main/first media frame was only 11.6% and 9.8%, respectively. Coherent to this candidate's claimed intention to not pursue a negative campaign, the salience of conflict in Marina's online campaign was, overall, relatively low.

Regarding the remaining media frames, the Personalization, Human-Interest and Scandal were on some occasions, on all three SNS, the primary aspect of the online messages of Marina. From these three, the Personalization and Human-Interest were the two most salient, the former on Twitter and Facebook and the latter on YouTube. These results reveal two interesting aspects. The first one is that the personal history of Marina was frequently the primary aspect of her messages. The second one is that the video was the main format used by this campaign to appeal to the electorate's emotions.

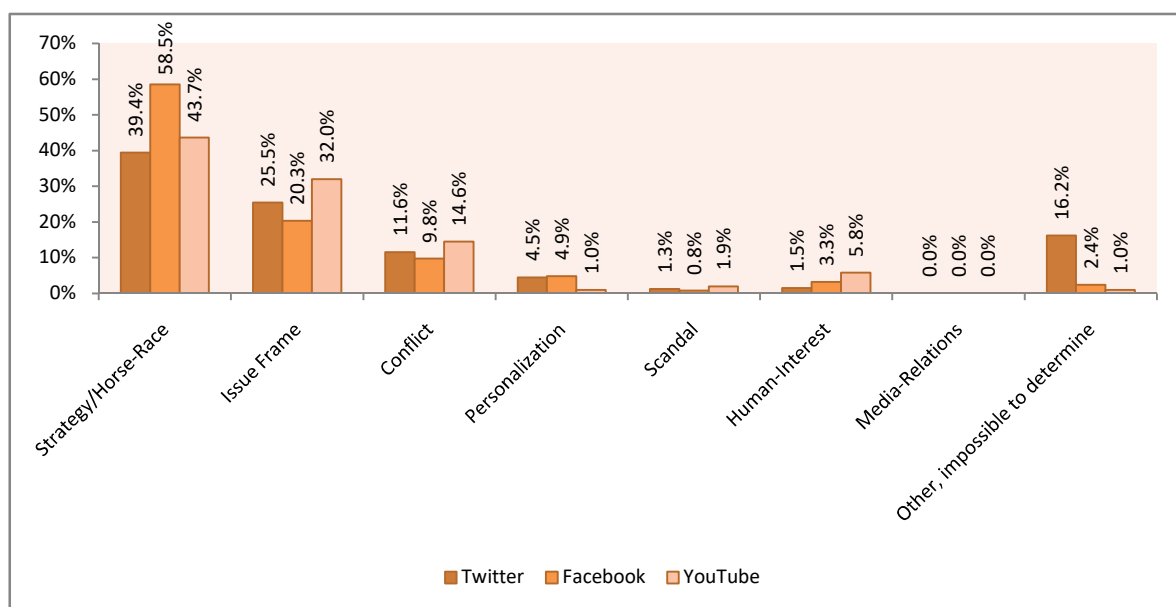


Figure 71 - First/main frame salience in Marina's SNS campaign.

Regarding the nature of the issues discussed, there was not a particular category of issues that clearly dominated the online campaign of Marina (Figure 72). The three most salient topics of issues in this candidate's campaign were Economy and Work, Welfare and Family and Education. While Economy and Work, mainly issues related to the independence of the Brazilian central bank, was the most salient topic in both Twitter and Facebook messages, in the case of YouTube, Education was the topic more frequently raised in the videos of this campaign. The videos discussing education were often linked to the personal life of Marina and the fact that this candidate only learned how to read only when she was sixteen. Another category relatively salient in the online campaign of this candidate, particularly on YouTube, was Environmental Protection. Environmental causes not only were Marina's main area of expertise but also the reason why this candidate became worldwide known.

Three categories of issues (Foreign Policy; Migration and Immigration; and National Security) were not prominent on any of the three SNS. In addition to this, issues related to the topics of Society, Religion and Culture; Finances and Taxes; Transport and Energy; and Institutional Design were also absent from Marina's Facebook campaign. Finally, there was a considerable proportion of social media items with the Issues Frame, particularly on Facebook (31.1%), which discussed substantive political issues belonging to various categories.

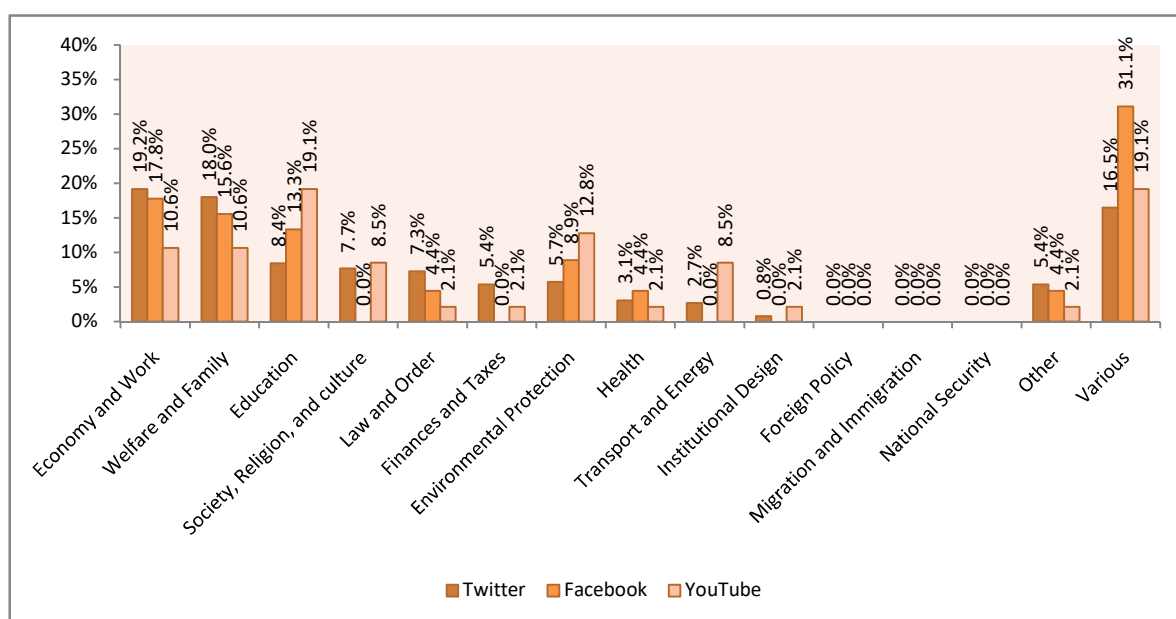


Figure 72 - Nature of issues in Marina's SNS campaign.

As we saw, the most salient frame in the campaign of all three main Brazilian candidates analyzed in this chapter was the Strategy/Horse-Race. However, the specific

aspects of this frame that were addressed varied considerably between those candidates. In the case of Marina's online campaign, the salience of the sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race also differed between the three SNS. As we can see in Figure 73, in the case of Facebook, none of the Strategy/Horse-Race sub-Frames clearly stood out. On this platform, the most salient sub-frames were Turnout (18.7%), Strategy (15.4%) and Endorsement (15.4%). The Experiencing and the Support sub-Frames were also more salient in the Facebook content. In addition to this, also 2.4% of Marina's Facebook messages dealt with fundraising. Marina was the only Brazilian candidate that used the social media, at least in the period of this analysis, to collect money for her campaign. Following Howard Dean's fundraising strategy, Marina campaigned on the importance of having a large number of small donations supporting her campaign, rather than a small number of very large donations.

In the case of Twitter the most salient aspect was the Strategy and the way the candidate was conducting the campaign (21.9%). The salience of other sub-aspects on this platform was comparatively low. Nevertheless the Horse-Race sub-aspect was also considerably more salient on this platform, when compared to the other two SNS, with 5.9% of the messages focusing on this topic. Finally, similar to Facebook, a reasonable amount of Twitter messages (8.7%) offered the online audience an opportunity to follow and experience, with live streaming videos, the campaign of this candidate.

With respect to YouTube, there were two sub-frames relatively salient. These sub-Frames were, again, the Strategy sub-frame (used in 28.2% of the videos) and the Endorsement sub-frame (used in 31.1% of the videos). In general, the Brazilian candidates, particularly Dilma and Marina, used the YouTube to show the electorate the different artists and public figures that supported their campaigns. Our analysis confirms that the endorsement from celebrities, particularly artists, played an important role in the 2014 Brazilian election, with all three main candidates also having their own campaign song performed by one or various renowned musicians. In the case of Marina Silva, her campaign song, which frequently appeared in the social media messages of this candidate, was composed for her by the famous Brazilian artist Gilberto Gil.

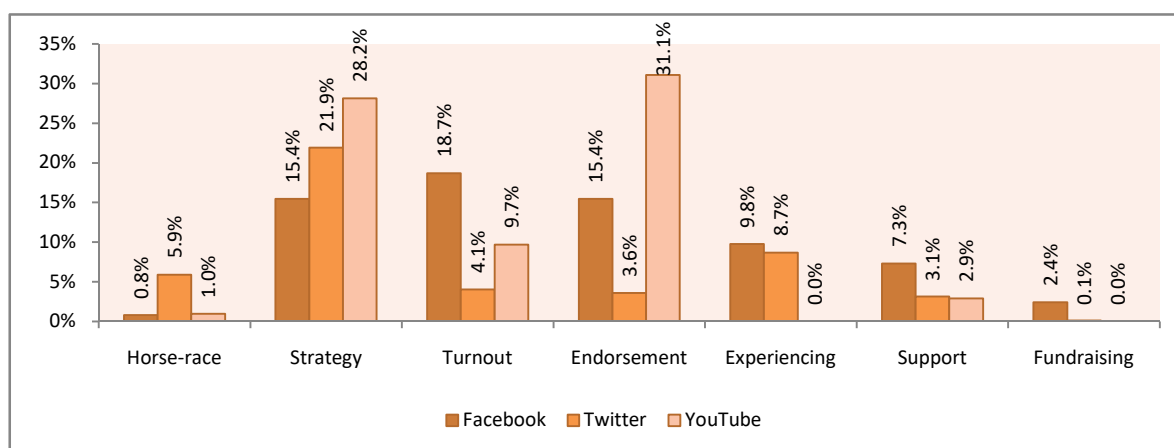


Figure 73 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in Marina's SNS campaign.

With respect to the type of conflict in Marina's campaign, the results were similar Aécio's online campaign and the press news coverage of this election. As Figure 74 shows, the majority of attacks on all SNS, particularly on Facebook, were aimed at the opponent's traits and values. In the case of Facebook, the personal traits/values attacks corresponded to 78% of the attacks that were shown on this platform. On Twitter and YouTube, the proportion of attacks aimed towards the opponents' values and traits were 62% and 44%, respectively. Only about one quarter of the attacks shown in the three social media analyzed focused on the opponent's political issues. However, the low salience that the attacks on issues had in Marina's campaign can be, in a way, justified by the reluctance of the other two candidates from presenting a campaign document with concrete policy proposals. Indeed, the attacks or criticism in Marina's campaign were mainly related to the fact that her main opponents did not present any government program or that they were simply conducting extremely negative campaigns against her.

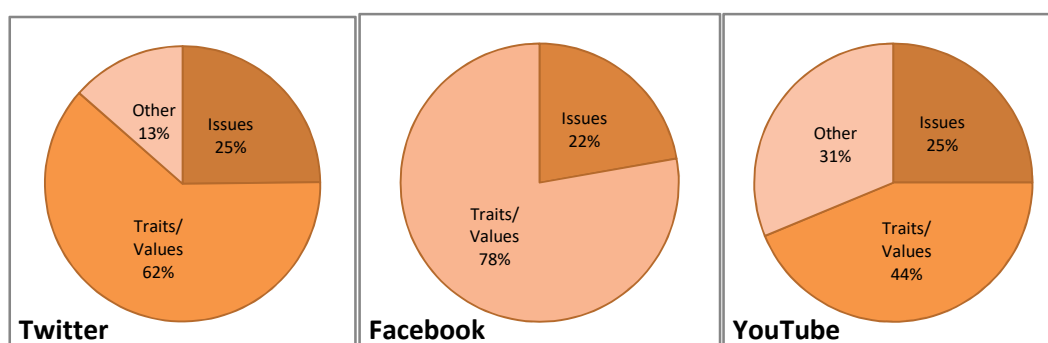


Figure 74 - Type of attack in Marina's online campaign

Finally, the additional information presented in Marina's Twitter and Facebook posts also suggests that this candidate used these two SNS in different ways, or for different purposes (Figure 75). On Twitter, the majority of posts (70.2%) did not include any type of additional content. Also none of the Twitter posts included a news article from the press. The

remaining types of content were included with, more or less, the same frequency. On Facebook, on the contrary, only 3.3% of the messages did not have any sort of additional content. The majority of Marina's Facebook messages had either a video (39%), or a campaign article (21.1%), or a live streaming video (9.8%) or simply a campaign picture or image (26.8%).

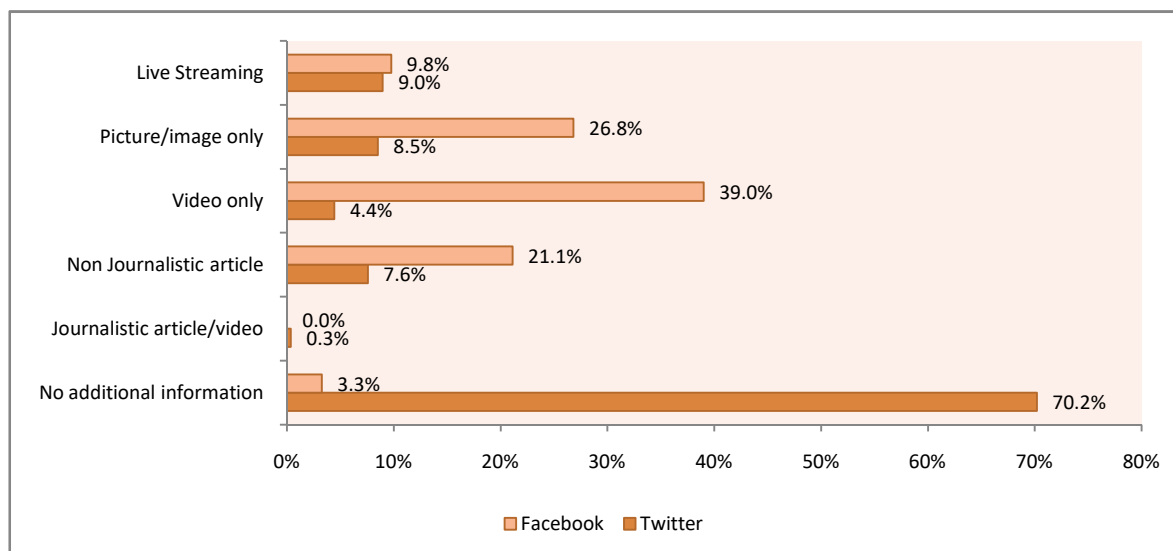


Figure 75 - Additional content also included in Marina's Facebook/Twitter posts.

6.5 – *The Brazilian general elections of 2013, uninformative news or hollow campaign?*

The previous sections in this chapter analyzed the news coverage of the 2014 Brazilian election and the social media campaign of the three main presidential candidates. Regarding the press, we found that the Brazilian journalists mainly framed this election in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict. The Conflict Frame, however, did not appear to be a particularly salient aspect in the candidates' online messages. This section compares both the press and SNS to see if the campaign framed by the journalists differed considerably from the campaign framed, online, by the three main Brazilian candidates.

Once again, as we can see in Figure 76, the results of the comparison between SNS and the press, in terms of the salience of seven generic media frames common to political events, give further support to the *Uninformative News* hypothesis. In other words, similarly to what we observed for the U.S. and Italy, the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race and the Conflict Frames was higher in the news coverage in comparison to the online campaign of the three Brazilian candidates. In addition to this, also the salience of the Issues Frame was once again higher in the candidates' social media campaign.

In the case of Strategy/Horse-Race, this media frame was included in 62.6% of the news articles. Comparatively, a smaller proportion of online content (56.2%) focused on those aspects. However, compared to the U.S. and Italian examples, the difference between the press and SNS, with respect to the salience of Strategy and Horse-Race aspects, was considerably smaller. In this sense the online campaign of the Brazilian candidates was considerably less informative since the online content of the three main candidates focused excessively on the way they were conducting their campaigns.

In the case of conflict the difference between the two media was more noticeable. The Conflict Frame was present in 42.6% of the news articles while only 19% of the candidates' messages included this aspect. Overall, the proportion of items showing conflict between political actors was two times higher in the traditional news media in comparison to the candidates' communication on SNS. This difference is particularly interesting since the press often suggested that attacking the opponents was one of the main strategies of both Dilma and Aécio, a strategy that was not at all reflected in these two candidates' online campaigns. Even though we cannot say that the press deliberately distorted the Brazilian campaign, by making conflict between politicians more salient in the news articles about this election, our results suggest that when political candidates do not rely on the traditional media to campaign (e.g. news media coverage or television advertisement) they indeed tend to produce, as it is the case in Social Networking Sites, less negative campaigns. However, as it was noted on one occasion by a campaign analyst, the Brazilian campaign was not as negative as the press and some candidates, particularly Marina, seemed to suggest⁸⁵. For him, Marina spent more time “crying and complaining” than being attacked by her opponents.

Not only the online campaign was less negative but apparently also more “informative”, in terms of the salience of substantive political issues. While the Issues Frame was present in 26.7% of the news in the press, the proportion of SNS items framed in terms of substantive political issues was relatively higher (37%). Even though the Brazilian candidates still gave priority, in their online messages, to the strategy/horse-race aspect of their campaigns, they were nevertheless still more likely than the journalists to convey and discuss substantive political issues. In fact, all three Brazilian candidates in 2014 used the Internet as one of their main channels, if not the main channel, to inform the electorate about their policy proposals and also to debate, through interactive social media initiatives, those proposals on cyberspace.

⁸⁵ Dilma cai, Aécio cresce, *O Globo* (17/09/14).

Besides the differences in these three frames, it is also interesting to see that political scandals were considerably more salient in the traditional media news coverage of the election. While in SNS the Scandal Frame was used in 4.7% of the stories, in the case of the traditional news media this figure was almost four times higher (19.4%). This suggests that candidates were not interested, as much as the journalists were, in raising political scandals in the campaign.

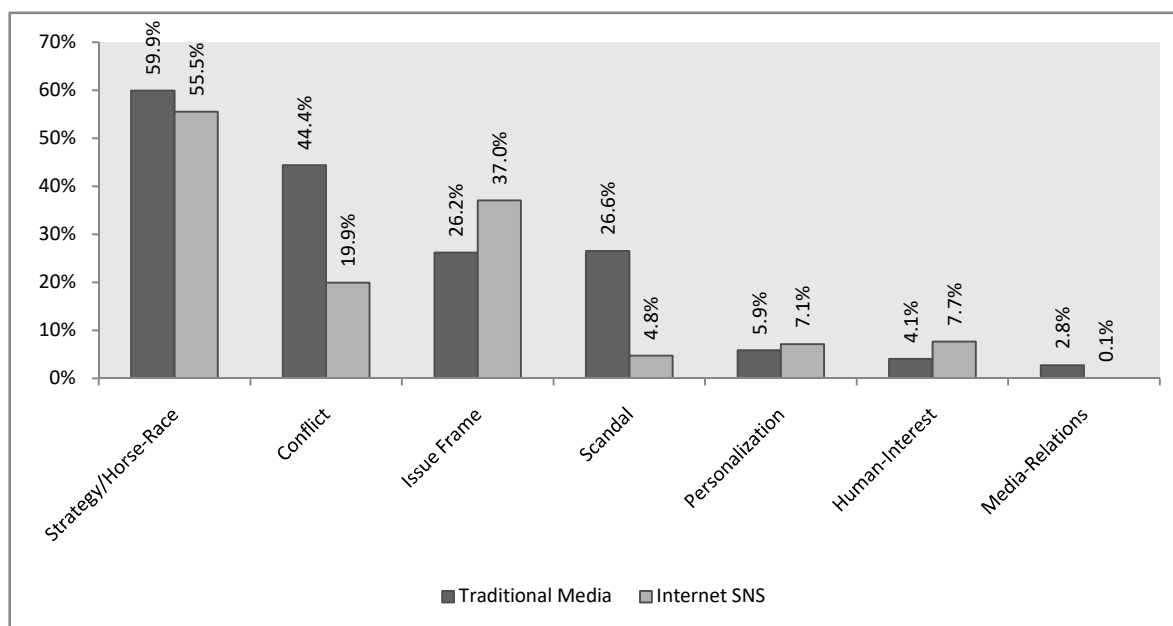


Figure 76 - Salience of frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

However, as we can see in Table 9, the news articles exclusively focused on only one of the three candidates were, with the exception of Marina, more frequently framed in terms of political issues than the respective campaign of that candidate on social media. The news articles focused on Dilma were the ones more frequently framed in terms of substantive political issues, while Marina received, in the press, the least informative news coverage, despite the fact of being the only candidate that actually released an electoral manifesto. With respect to conflict, it was in the news articles solely focused on Aécio's campaign that this frame was less salient. Overall, limiting our sample to the news articles exclusively focused on only one of the three candidates, we could say that Marina had the least informative and negative campaign out of the three candidates. That result does not reflect, however, the campaigns conducted on social media by Dilma, Aécio and Marina.

Table 9 - Salience of Issues and Conflict in the SNS campaign and newspaper articles exclusively focused on one of the Brazilian candidates⁸⁶.

	Issues			Conflict		
	Dilma	Aécio	Marina	Dilma	Aécio	Marina
News Coverage	51.6%	40.9%	35.4%	70%	71.2%	54.9%
SNS Campaign	38.4%	35.3%	37.5%	14.1%	25.2%	20.4%
News – SNS	13.2	5.6	-2.1	55.9	46	34.5

When we look at the first frame used, however, the picture slightly changes (Figure 77). More precisely, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame becomes more salient in social media (48%), in comparison to the traditional news media coverage (45.8%). Considering the two cases previously analyzed, the U.S. and Italy, this result is surprising and might be to a certain extent related to the higher salience that the Scandal Frame had in the news coverage of the election. The fact that journalists had another “exciting” topic to report on made it less necessary for them to focus on the strategy and horse-race aspects of the campaign. If the goal of the journalists, when reporting political events, is indeed to make the stories about the election more attractive for the public, the scandals involving politicians might indeed be a more effective source of material.

On the other hand, the Conflict Frame, which differs to what we saw in the case of Italy and the U.S., was less salient in the SNS campaign, in comparison to the press coverage. While in the press 17.2% of the news was primarily framed in terms of conflict, on SNS, this media frame was the first and main aspect in only 11% of the items analyzed. Independently of how we look at it, the salience of conflict on the online campaign of the Brazilian candidates was always lower than in the news coverage of the election.

The Issues Frame was the only aspect with a similar result when compared to the other two elections in the U.S. and Italy. The salience of this frame on the Internet (27%) was, in fact, two times higher than its salience in the traditional media (10.4%). Even though the online campaign of the Brazilian candidates was not, as we saw, particularly informative, it was nevertheless more likely to discuss and convey, compared to the news articles in the press, substantive political issues.

⁸⁶ Number/percentage of newspaper articles focused exclusively on one of the candidates: Dilma(91/10.9%); Aécio(66/7.9%); Marina(82/9.8%).

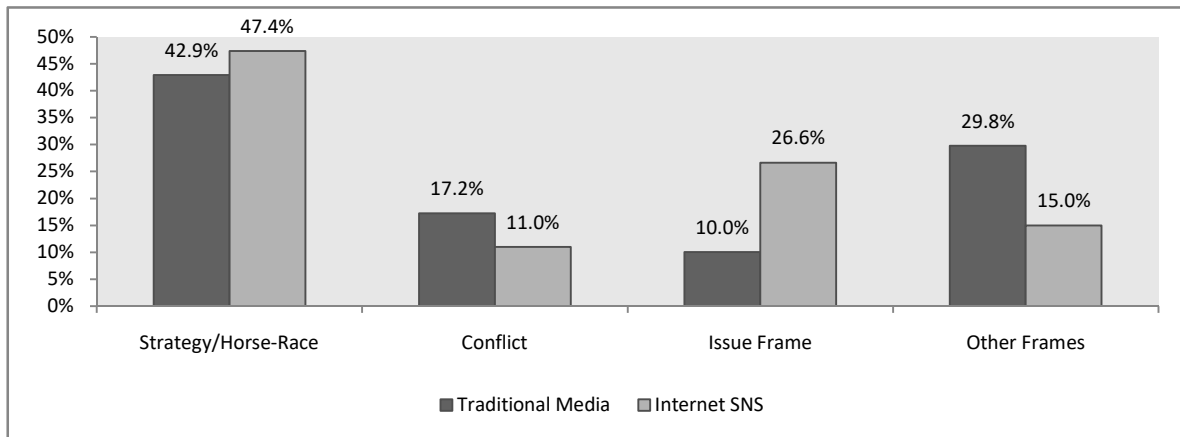


Figure 77 - First frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

Finally, when we look at the nature of the issues presented in both media (Figure 78), we cannot clearly say that the press neglected any of the issue categories that were more salient in the candidates' online campaign. The most salient category in both types of media was Economy and Work. However, there were two categories of issues, Education and Environmental Protection that were more salient on SNS in comparison to the press. On the other hand, three categories (Economy and Work; Society, Religion and Culture; and Finances and Taxes) were considerably more salient in the press than on the Internet. Only one category of issues, the Migration and Immigration, was absent from both news coverage and candidates' online campaign.

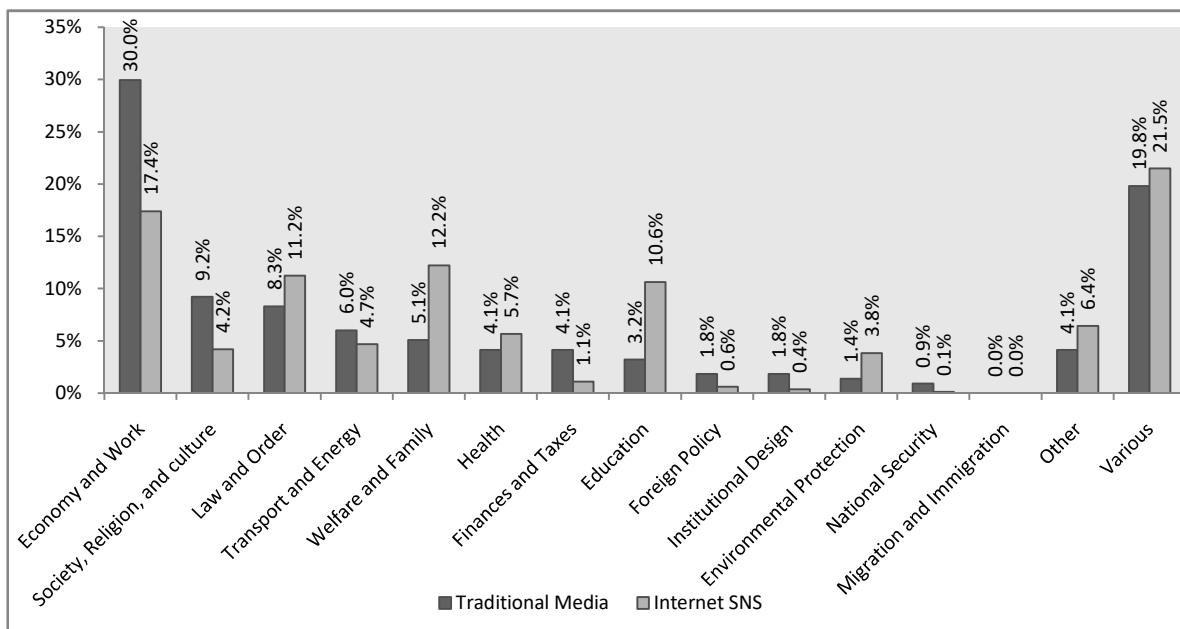


Figure 78 - Type of issues in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2014 Brazilian elections.

Chapter Seven – News Coverage and Online Campaign of the Portuguese Parliamentary Election of 2015

7.1 – The news coverage of the Portuguese election.

The Portuguese legislative elections of 2016 took place on October 4. At that time Portugal had a coalition government that was formed by two parties, the center-right Partido Social Democrático (PSD) and the right-wing Partido do Centro Democrático Social – Partido Popular (CDS-PP). In light of their governmental experience, these two parties decided to run together in this election with a coalition that was named Portugal à Frente (PaF). The two main campaign actors of this coalition were the incumbent prime minister Pedro Passos Coelho, the leader of PSD, and Paulo Portas, leader of CDS-PP and Portuguese deputy prime minister at the time. In the end, this coalition was the most voted party in the election, winning a small majority but unable to gather majority support of the parliament. A second minority government was then formed and headed by António Costa, the leader of Partido Socialista (PS), which was the second most voted party in the election. The other two main parties in the election were Bloco de Esquerda (BE), headed by Catarina Martins, and the coalition, the Coligação Democrática Unitária (CDU), formed by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Green Party, led by Jerónimo de Sousa.

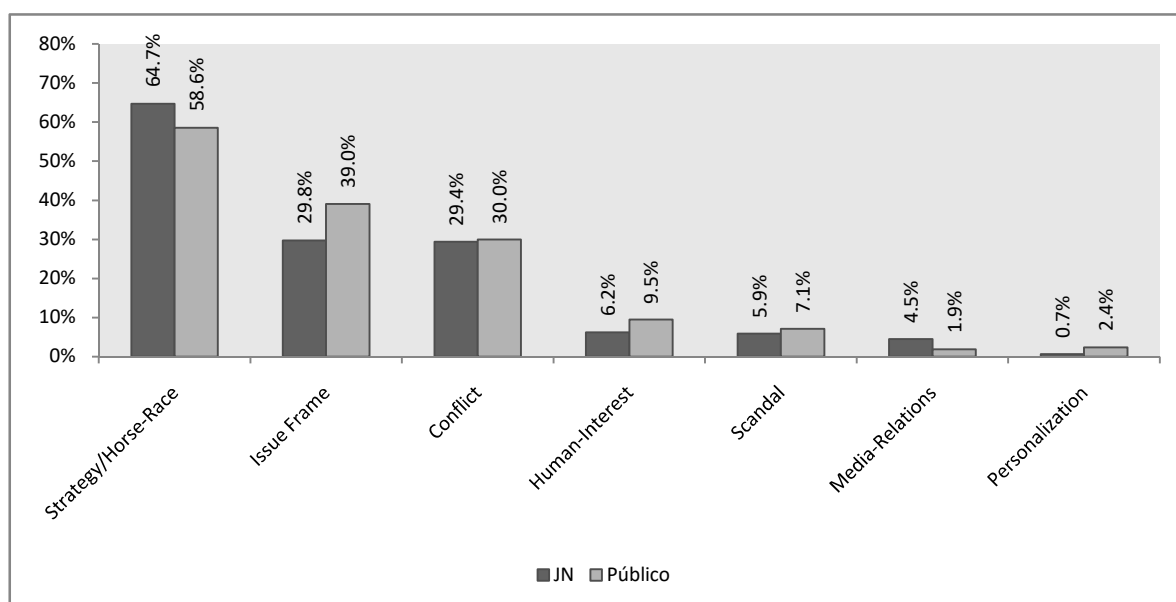


Figure 79 - Frames present in the news coverage of the 2015 Portuguese election.

Regarding the traditional media news coverage of this election, as we can see in Figure 79, the media frame mostly used by the journalists was again the Strategy/Horse-Race

Frame. In the case of JN, 64% of the news pieces dealt extensively with aspects related to the parties strategies to win the election and their position in the polls, with this percentage slightly lower but still high in the case of Público (58.6%).

The Issues Frame was the second most salient frame in both newspapers. However, the salience of this frame was slightly higher in the Público (39%) in comparison to JN (29.8%). The third most salient frame was the Conflict Frame, with practically no difference between the two newspapers. While in the case of JN, the percentage of stories showing some sort of conflict between the actors was 29.4%, in the case of Público the number was exactly 30%. It is interesting to observe that even though there were some differences between the two newspapers regarding the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race and Issues Frames, the same was not the case for the Conflict Frame.

Regarding the remaining four frames analyzed (Human-Interest, Scandal, Media-Relations and Personalization), their salience was relatively low in both newspapers. Nevertheless, when we compare the two newspapers, the salience of the Human-Interest, Scandal and Personalization Frames was relatively higher in the Público, while the Media-Relations Frame was more salient in the JN's news coverage.

When we look at the first/main frames used in the news coverage of the 2015 Portuguese legislative election, the results remain mostly the same. As we see in Figure 80, the Strategy/Horse-Race, Issues and Conflict Frames were again, in this order, the most salient aspects. Nevertheless, one aspect worth mentioning is that, when we compare this figure with the previous one, the Conflict Frame becomes slightly less salient in Público (10.5%) than in JN (13.1%). This difference might relate to the size of the articles in both newspapers (with Público generally having longer articles), and shows that even though the overall presence of the Conflict Frame was slightly higher in the news coverage of Público, this frame was less often the central/first aspect of the article in this newspaper. This also suggests that even though conflict between actors is often included by the journalists in their news coverage of political campaigns, most of the time conflict shown is not the main topic of the story but rather some additional information, which is added to the news piece. This is an interesting pattern that was observed for all the four elections analyzed in this thesis, and somehow challenges the idea that conflict is pursued by the journalists to give some newsworthiness to their pieces and gain the public's attention. On the one hand it is true that conflict between actors is very salient in the news coverage of political elections (especially in the case of the U.S., Italy and Brazil where almost half of the news pieces included the

Conflict Frame), on the other hand conflict is rarely used as the main aspect of the story, often being just included in articles focusing other aspects.

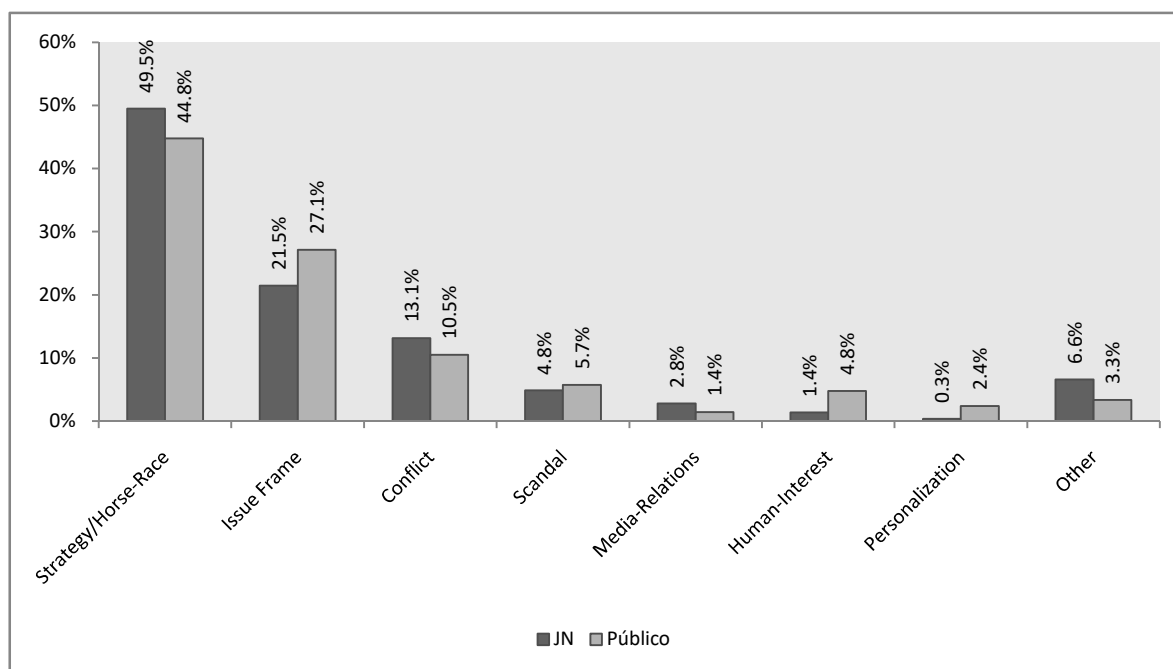


Figure 80 - The main/first frame present in the news coverage of the 2015 Portuguese election.

Regarding the nature of the issues present in the press coverage of the Portuguese election, there were some differences between the two newspapers that were analyzed (Figure 81). In the case of JN, the most salient political issues' category was Welfare and Family. From all the news stories in this newspaper that dealt extensively with substantive political issues, 24.4% of them dealt, in a substantial way, with aspects related to the State's social benefits, with a particular emphasis on the reform of the Portuguese social security system (an issue that both the two main political parties, to a certain extent, agreed on). The remaining issue categories received considerably less attention and some topics like National Security, Foreign Policy and Law and Order were even completely absent, as the single/main issue category in the story, in this newspaper's news coverage of the elections. However, in the case of Público the most salient issues related to Economy and Work, which was the main issue category in 30.5% of the stories that dealt extensively with substantive political issues.

Besides Economy and Work, there were also three other issue categories that were considerably more salient in Público's news coverage, in comparison to JN. These categories were National Security, Society, Religion and Culture, and Migration and Immigration. Given the refugee crisis in Europe, the relatively low salience of these issues in JN news coverage is more surprising than the relatively high salience of this topic in Público's news articles.

Finally, Foreign Policy and Law and Order were never the main issue category in the news stories published by Público.

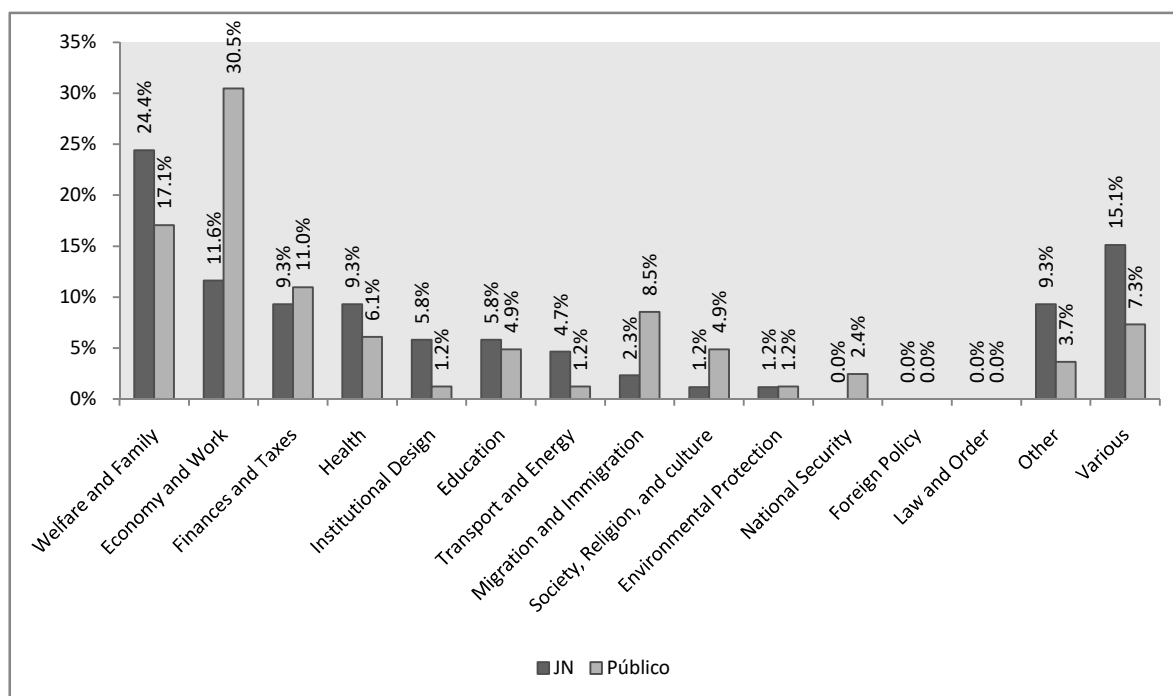


Figure 81 - Nature of the political issues present in the news coverage of the 2015 Portuguese election.

As we saw, Strategy/Horse-Race was the most salient media frame in both JN and Público, appearing in approximately 60% of the news stories. Regarding the salience of the sub-aspects of that frame, as we can see in Figure 82, approximately half of the articles in both newspapers dealt extensively with the political parties' strategies to win the election or the way parties were conducting their campaigns. In addition to this, also a high number of stories focused on the Horse-Race aspects of the election (who was winning and losing, future government alliances between parties and the possible consequences of the election results). In the case of JN the proportion of articles including this sub-frame was 26% with opinion polls also being included in 7.6% of the articles. The salience of this frame was slightly lower in Público's news coverage, with 23.3% of the stories including the Horse-Race sub-frame and only 6.7% of the articles also presenting opinion polls. Finally, the number of stories that focused on the parties' efforts to mobilize voters was 13.8% in JN and 11% in Público.

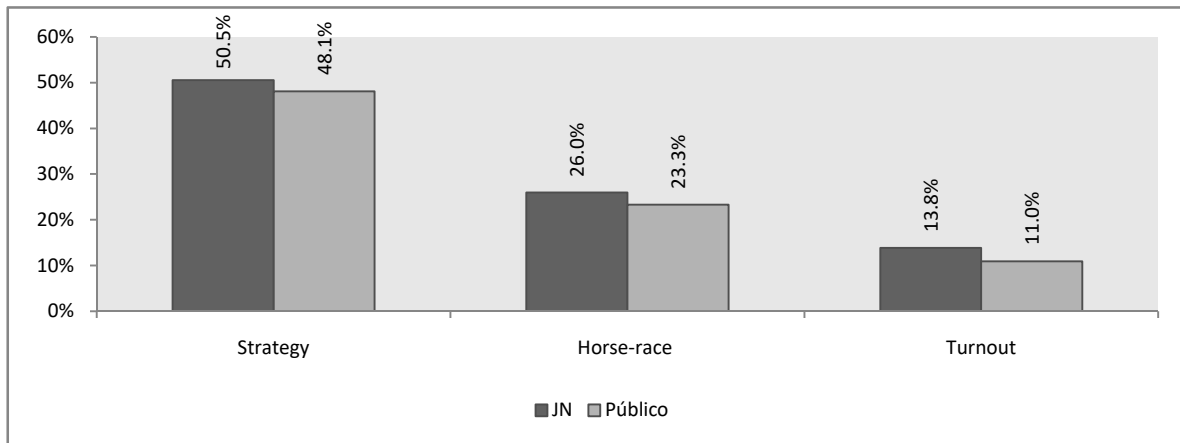


Figure 82 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in the news coverage of the 2015 Portuguese election.

The last aspect analyzed in this section is the type of conflict present in the news articles (Figure 83). The most frequent type of attack shown in the Portuguese press focused on political issues. In the case of JN, the percentage of attacks on issues was 69%, while the proportion of the attacks directed towards the opponents' personal traits or values was 30%. In Público's news coverage, the salience of issue attacks was even higher (87%). In the case of this newspaper, only 9% present in the news pieces aimed at other actors' personal characteristics or values.

This result is interesting and somewhat surprising if we compare it to what we saw in the previous three chapters, where the salience of personal traits/values attacks was considerably higher. While in the case of the U.S. the personal traits/values attacks were as salient as the attacks on issues, in the cases of Italy and Brazil the former was the dominant type of conflict present in the press. In the Portuguese, issue attacks were the dominant type of conflict in the news coverage of the 2015 election.

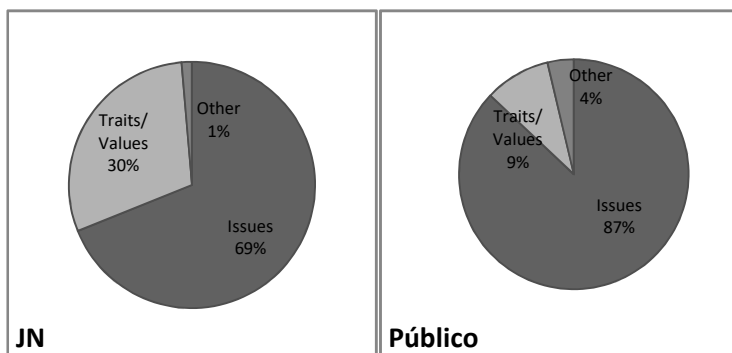


Figure 83 - Type of conflict present in the news coverage of the 2015 Portuguese election.

7.2 – Portugal à Frente's campaign on the SNS.

As mentioned in the previous section, the coalition PaF, formed by the two parties PSD and CDS-PP, was the most voted party in the Portuguese parliamentary election. This coalition received 36.9% of the vote, which translated into 107 parliamentary seats for these two parties⁸⁷ (89 from PSD and 18 from CDS-PP). After the election, these two parties attempted to form a minority government but, without the support of the new left leaning parliament, that new government only lasted 12 days, which entered into the history of Portuguese democracy as the shortest-lived executive.

Regarding PaF's online campaign, our results clearly suggest that it was mostly centered on Strategy/Horse-Race aspects (Figure 84). In general, the online campaign of this party, in terms of the use of the generic media frames included in this analysis, did not differ substantially from the news coverage of this election. In all of the three SNS analyzed, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was consistently and considerably the most salient media frame. In the case of Twitter, 71% percent of all posts dealt with strategy and horse-race aspects of the election. In contrast, the salience of the Issues Frame was consistently low on all three SNS. Even though the Issues Frame was the second most salient aspect, the percentage of posts that dealt extensively with substantive political issues was, in general, lower than 30%.

The salience of conflict was also relatively low in this party's online campaign. It was, nevertheless, mainly through the YouTube videos that the PaF campaign challenged or attacked their electoral opponents. In fact, the percentage of YouTube videos (25.8%) that showed conflict between actors was two times higher than the percentage of posts on Facebook (11.8%) and Twitter (10.9%) regarding this aspect. The remaining four media frames were practically absent from the online campaign of PaF. The only aspect worth mentioning is the relatively higher salience that the Human-Interest Frame and the Personalization Frame had on YouTube. The Scandal Frame was completely absent from this party's campaign on all three platforms.

⁸⁷ The PSD also got 5 additional seats from the electoral district of Madeira, where the two parties presented different candidate lists.

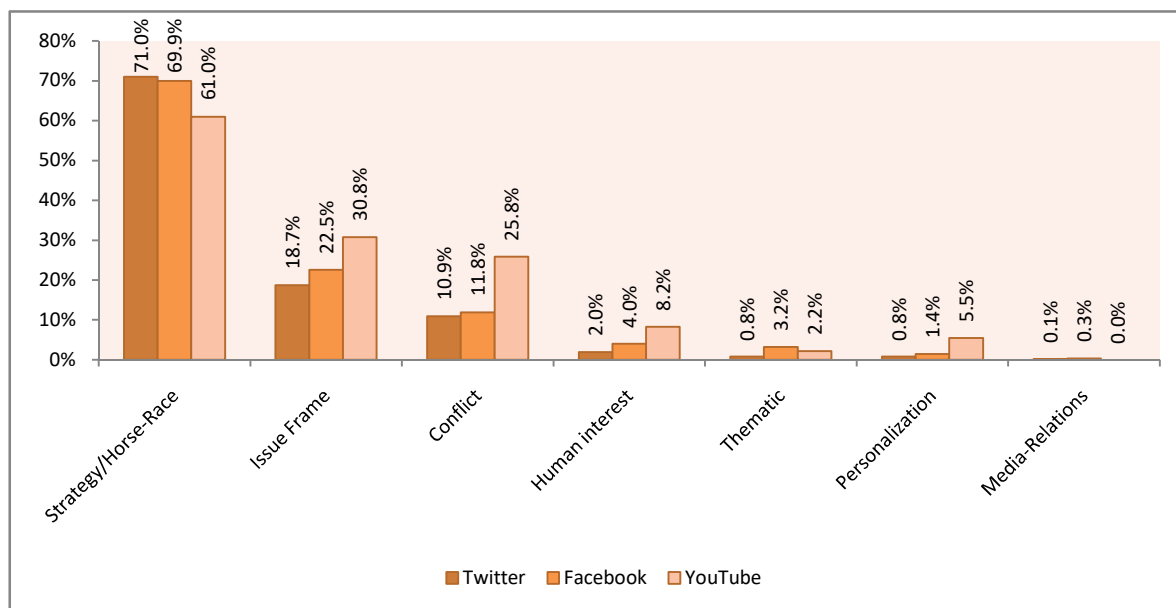


Figure 84 –Frames salience in PaF's SNS campaign.

If we look at the main/first frames used in the campaign of PaF the results remain the same. The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame continues to be the most salient aspect in this party's campaign. As demonstrated in Figure 85, on all three SNS, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the first and central aspect in the majority of the posts (70.5% for Twitter and 71.4% for Facebook) and videos (55.5% in the case of YouTube).

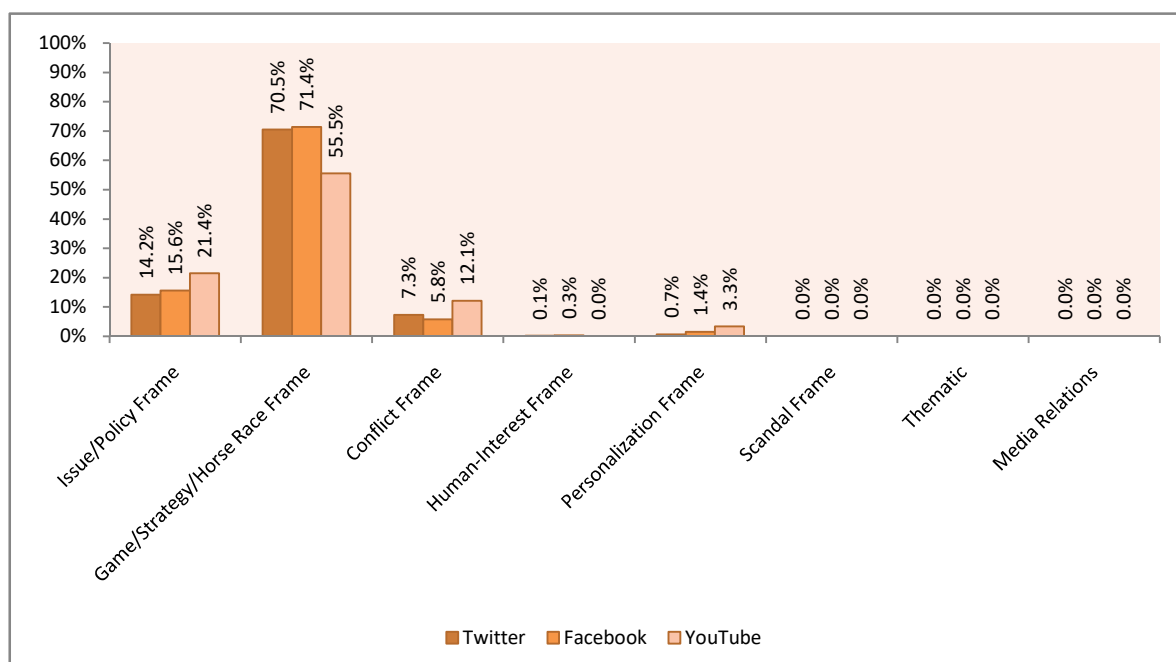


Figure 85 - First/main frame salience in PaF's SNS campaign.

The proportion of online content that had the Issues Frame as the first aspect of the message was only of 21.4% in the case of YouTube, and even lower on the other two

platforms. Similarly, the Conflict Frame was again more salient on YouTube in comparison to the other two platforms. The salience of this frame was nevertheless very low in the online campaign of this party. The remaining frames were practically never the main aspect of the online messages of this party's campaign. These results suggest that conveying political issues to the electorate was not a priority in this party's online campaign. Instead, the PaF coalition chose to primarily frame its own campaign in terms of strategy and horse-race aspects on all of the three social media.

As we saw, PaF's electoral campaign did not make much use of the SNS to convey substantive political issues. It is nevertheless important to see, when they did convey relevant policy information to the electorate, which type of issues were more emphasized. Figure 86 shows that there were three topics that were consistently and considerably more salient in this party's online messages (Economy and Work; Welfare and Family; and Finances and Taxes). These results are not surprising considering that this election happened a few years after the implementation of a rigid bailout program in 2011, to cope with this country's financial crises, which imposed several austerity measures on Portugal that were implemented by this coalition's government. For this reason, the PaF's main campaign message for the 2015 legislative election was that Portugal, with the 'sacrifice' of all its citizens, had finally overcome the financial and economic crisis and could finally improve the economy, increase social benefits and reduce the tax burden on the citizens.

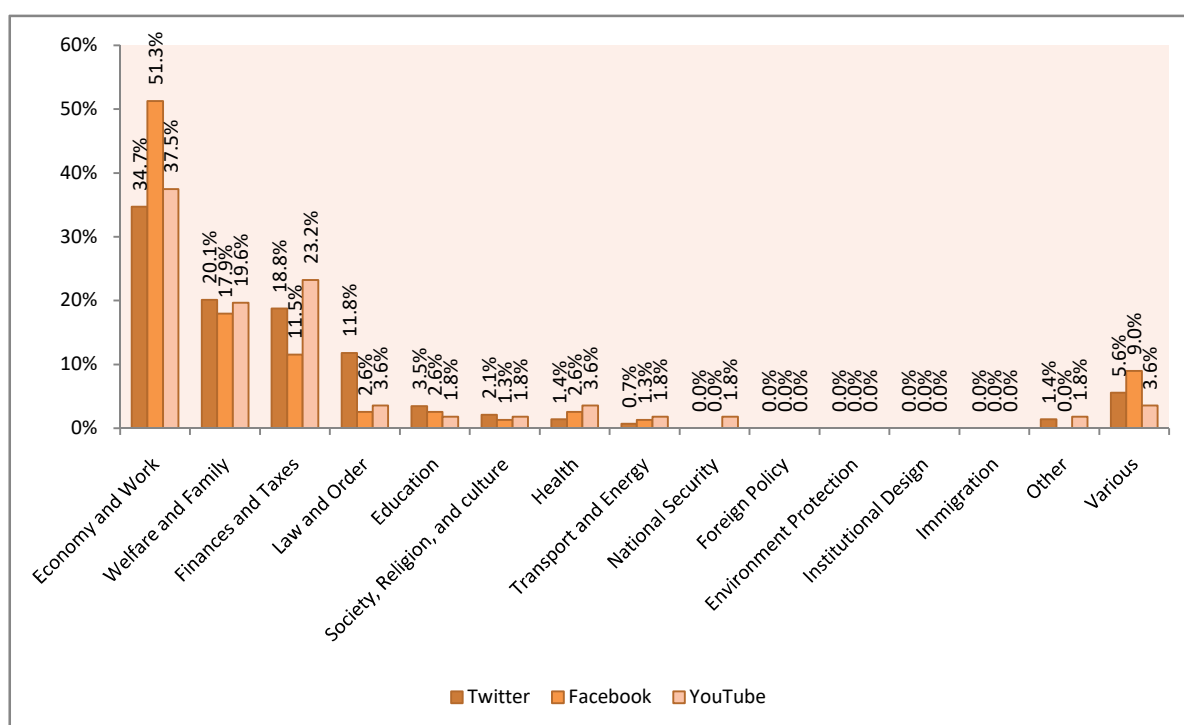


Figure 86 – Nature of issues in PaF's SNS campaign.

However, the remaining issue categories were only discussed on very few occasions. With the exception of Law and Order, which was a relatively salient topic on Twitter (11.8%), all the other categories were partly or completely neglected in the online messages of this party. Some topics such as Environment Protection and Immigration were completely absent from the campaign on all of the three SNS.

As we saw, the communication of substantive policy issues was not a central aspect in the online campaign of PaF. Instead, it was the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame that was the dominant topic on all three SNS. Figure 87 shows the specific aspects of this frame, or sub-frames, which were more salient in the campaign. In the case of Facebook and YouTube, the most dominant sub-frames were the Strategy and Turnout. This shows us that most online posts of this party dealt with the way the party was campaigning, with posts about the party rallies or other campaign events, and the party's effort to make people vote (for them) in the election.

In the case of Facebook, 51.4% included the Strategy sub-frame, and 13.6% dealt with Turnout aspects. In the case of YouTube, 44% of the messages dealt with the way the party was conducting its campaign and 18.7% included the Turnout sub-frame. In the case of Twitter, the most salient sub-frame was Experiencing the Campaign. A considerable amount of Twitter posts (31.1%) included a link for a streaming video where users could directly follow the different campaign events. In addition, a considerable amount of the posts on this SNS (29.6%) dealt with the way this coalition was conducting its campaign.

Finally, an important aspect to mention is that none of the Facebook or Twitter posts had the Endorsement sub-frame. Only YouTube had one video with a public figure expressing his support for PaF. None of the posts or videos on the SNS requested monetary contributions for the campaign, which is not surprising since only public funding is allowed in Portugal.

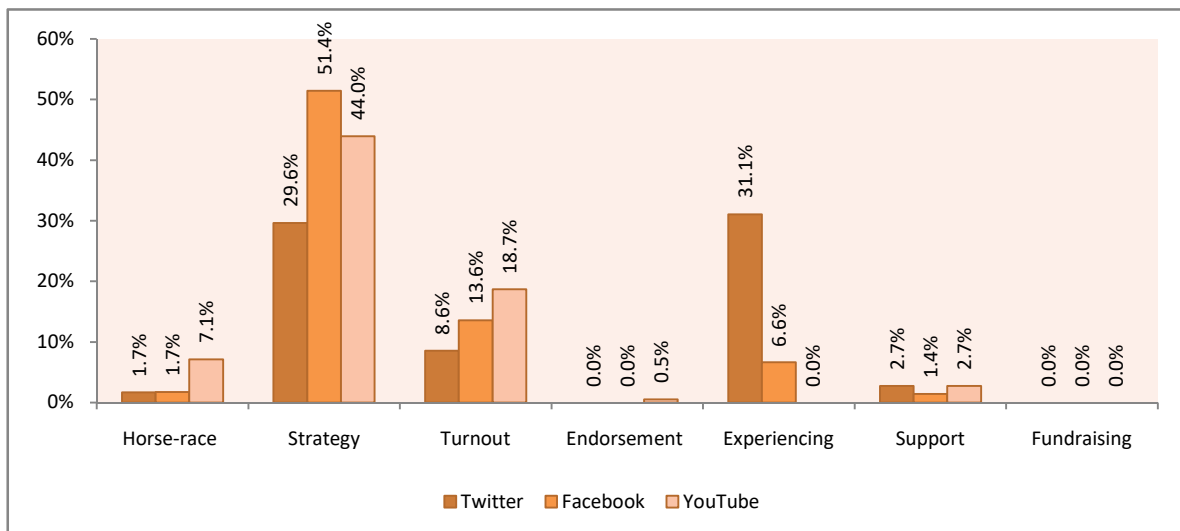


Figure 87 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race present in PaF's SNS campaign

When we look at the type of conflict present in the campaign messages of PaF the results are interesting when compared to the news coverage of this election. While the attacks on issues was the most salient type of conflict in the newspaper articles, in the PaF's social media campaign the majority of attacks, on all three SNS, were mainly aimed at the opponent's personal traits or values. This is most evident in the case of Facebook where 63% of all attacks were directed at the personal traits or values of the different campaign actors, and only 22% of the attacks criticized or challenged the opponents' political issues (Figure 88). In the case of YouTube the salience of traits/values attacks was similar to Facebook, corresponding to 63% of the attacks shown on this platform, with this figure being slightly lower on Twitter (55%). Regarding the salience of attacks on issues, this type of conflict was more frequent on Twitter (39%). On the other two SNS, the salience of this type of attack was 30%, in the case of YouTube, and 22% on Facebook. Overall, the pattern of conflict observed in the online campaign of this party, regarding the nature of the attacks, was similar on all the three platforms, particularly in the Facebook and YouTube campaigns.

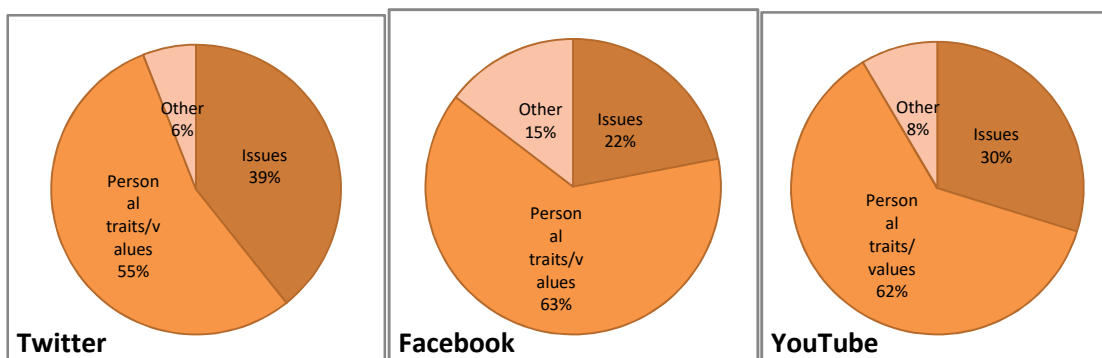


Figure 88 - Type of attack in PaF's SNS campaign.

Regarding the additional content in PaF's online campaign, the results clearly suggest that this coalition made different use of both platforms (Twitter and Facebook). In the case of Facebook, as we can see in Figure 89, only 0.6% of the messages did not include any type of additional information. The majority of Facebook posts included a picture or image (54.6%). A considerable amount of posts also included a campaign video (34.4%) and 6.6% of the Facebook posts were linked to a non-journalistic article (mostly to articles in PaF's website or blog-page). None of the posts on Facebook included an article from the traditional news media.

In the case of Twitter, also the majority of the posts (93.4%) included some sort of additional information. The videos were the most common type of additional content that was added to the Twitter messages. The campaign of PaF relied extensively on video content to convey their campaign messages and show its campaign events. In the period of analysis during the four weeks before election day, this party uploaded 182 videos on their YouTube channel and almost 40% of the Twitter posts also included a campaign video.

As we saw before, the strategy Sub-Frame Experiencing the Campaign was relatively salient in the Twitter campaign of this party. For this reason, it is not surprising that a relatively high number of PaF's Twitter posts (17.6%) included a link to a live streaming video of the campaign. This is an online campaign strategy that was employed, to different degrees, by several of the political actors' campaigns that were analyzed in this dissertation (e.g. M5S and Marina Silva).

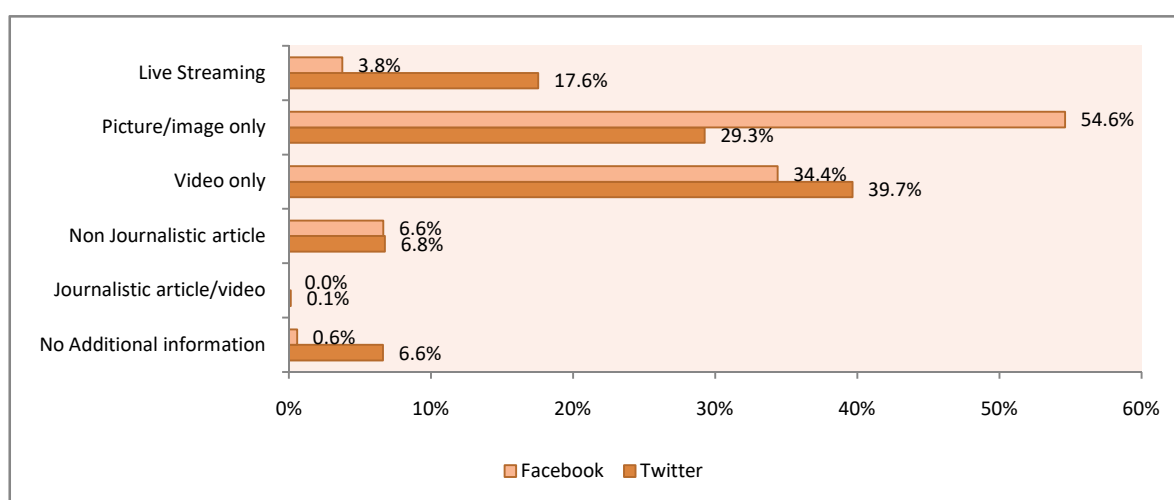


Figure 89 - Additional content also included in PaF's Facebook/Twitter posts.

7.3 – *Partido Socialista'* campaign on the SNS.

The Socialist Party (PS) was the second most voted party in the 2015 Portuguese elections, with 33.3% and electing 86 MPs. Despite not being the most voted party, PS ended up forming a minority government after successfully presenting and passing, together with the other two left-wing parties in the parliament, a motion of no confidence in the minority government of the winning coalition (PaF). The leader of this party, which became the Portuguese prime minister, was António Costa, the former mayor of Lisbon. Costa became the leader of PS after winning, in the previous year, the first primary elections held by this party. This party faced three important challenges in this election. The first was to reunite a party that had faced some internal divisions during and in the aftermath of its primary election. The second was to improve party's public image, since a considerable part of the electorate still blamed the PS for the need and request of the bailout program in 2011⁸⁸ which, similarly to what happened to Ireland and Greece, imposed a set of unpopular austerity measures in Portugal. The third and final challenge was to prevent a corruption investigation involving José Sócrates (former prime minister and leader of PS) from having negative repercussions in the party's electoral campaign.

Regarding the frames used by this party in the SNS campaign, as we can see in Figure 90, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the most salient aspect on all of the three online platforms. The salience of these aspects was especially high in this party's campaign on its official Facebook page. The results show that 81% of the total of Facebook posts, during the four weeks before election day, dealt extensively with the way this party was conducting the campaign, particularly by using images to simply illustrate what the campaign events looked like and where the candidates had been. In addition to this, only 17.1% of the Facebook content was framed in terms of substantive political issues and only 21% of the posts included conflict between the political actors. In the cases of Twitter and YouTube, the salience of the Issue and Conflict Frames was substantively higher than on Facebook. With respect to Twitter, the Issues Frame was included in 44.7% of the posts, being also identical with the amount of posts on this platform showing conflict (43.9%). Regarding YouTube, 40.4% of the videos included the Issues Frame and conflict between actors was present in 35.4% of the total number of videos.

These results show clear differences between the platforms analyzed, with respect to the media frames used. The campaign on Twitter was more informative but also more

⁸⁸ Sondagem indica que portugueses culpam PS pelo pedido de ajuda externa, *Jornal de Negócios* 07/04/2011.

negative than on the other SNS. Differently, on Facebook, even though the salience of conflict was much lower, the number of messages conveying substantive political information was also considerably lower. In other words, none of the social media offered a particularly informative campaign to the electorate.

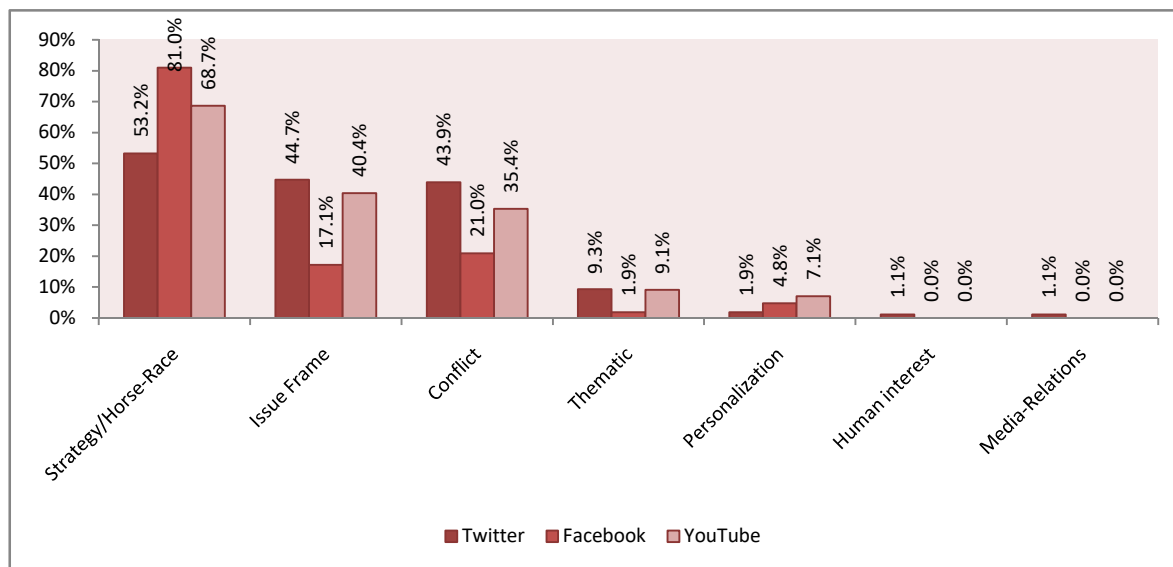


Figure 90 - Frames present in the in PS's SNS campaign.

From the four remaining aspects analyzed, the Personalization Frame was the most salient on all three SNS, particularly on YouTube where 7.1% of the videos dealt extensively with the personal characteristics of the leader of this party. From the four Portuguese parties analyzed, it was the campaign of PS that included the highest volume of messages and videos with the Personalization Frame. This result is not surprising since PS centered its campaign on the image of António Costa, who was often portrayed as person with a lot of accomplishments in his career, particularly owing to his work as mayor of Lisbon. One of the PS's main campaign slogans was that people "could trust" in António Costa, and the party even tried to initiate, through a website, a civil movement of citizens publicly endorsing the Socialist candidate⁸⁹. By focusing on its new party leader, PS could somehow depart from its previous unsuccessful government by present itself as a renewed/different party.

As for the remaining media frames (Human Interest; Media Relations and Scandal), their salience, as we would expect, was consistently low on all of the three SNS. The Human Interest and Media-Relations Frames were not observed in any of the Facebook posts or YouTube videos, and were only present in a small number of Twitter posts. The percentage of Twitter posts that included these two frames was 1.1% in both cases. Similarly, very few of the videos or posts disseminated by PS on the SNS dealt extensively with the actions or

⁸⁹ "PS lança outdoor digital com fotos de apoiantes e slogan "eu confio"", *O Público*, 08/09/2015

statements of political actors that were perceived as a scandal. On YouTube, only two percent of the videos included the Scandal Frame, and in the other two online social sites this proportion was even smaller (0.4% for Twitter and 1% in the case of Facebook). While in the cases of Facebook and Twitter the posts with the Scandal Frame were related to the questionable or immoral behavior by political actors directly linked to the positions they were holding, in the case of YouTube the scandals concerned gaffes or inappropriate statements of the opponents.

When we look only at the first frame that was presented in the online campaign of PS, the results remain essentially the same (Figure 91). The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame remains the dominant aspect in the items of all the three online applications. The salience of this aspect was again higher on Facebook, with about 78% of the posts dealing primarily with Strategy/Horse-Race. These results also further reinforce the idea that this party did not use its main Facebook account to convey political issues to the electorate. From all of the Facebook posts made by the Socialists during the four weeks before election day, only 3.8% of them dealt mainly with substantive political issues, a figure similar to the one observed for the Personalization Frame (2.9%). Finally, also the Conflict Frame had the lowest salience on Facebook (13.3%). Overall, even though the PS Facebook campaign was not particularly negative, in the sense that relatively few posts dealt with attacks on its opponents, the campaign predominantly focused on strategy and horse-race aspects and almost completely failed in informing the public on the party's positions on the different political issues.

Regarding the first media frames used in the two remaining platforms (Twitter and YouTube), there are two aspects worth mentioning. The first point is that the three key frames of this study had the least disparate salience on Twitter. On this online platform, the Strategy/Horse-Race was the dominant frame in 45.8% of the messages, the Conflict Frame in 26.9% and the Issues Frame in 22.7%. Twitter was also the platform with the highest number of messages having conflict as the messages' first aspect. Once again, even though the Issues Frame was overall more often included than the Conflict Frame in the PS Twitter campaign, the latter was more often shown as the first aspect of the message. To put differently, the amount of messages on Twitter primarily concerned with attacking the opponent was higher than the number of messages mainly focused in conveying substantive political information to the electorate. The second aspect worth mentioning from these results is that YouTube was the only SNS where the salience of the Issues Frame (as the main frame of the video) was higher (19.2%) than the Conflict Frame (14.1%). However, even though almost 1/5 of YouTube videos were mainly concerned with conveying substantive political information,

this value was still much smaller than the proportion of Twitter messages primarily dealing with Strategy/Horse-Race (63.6%).

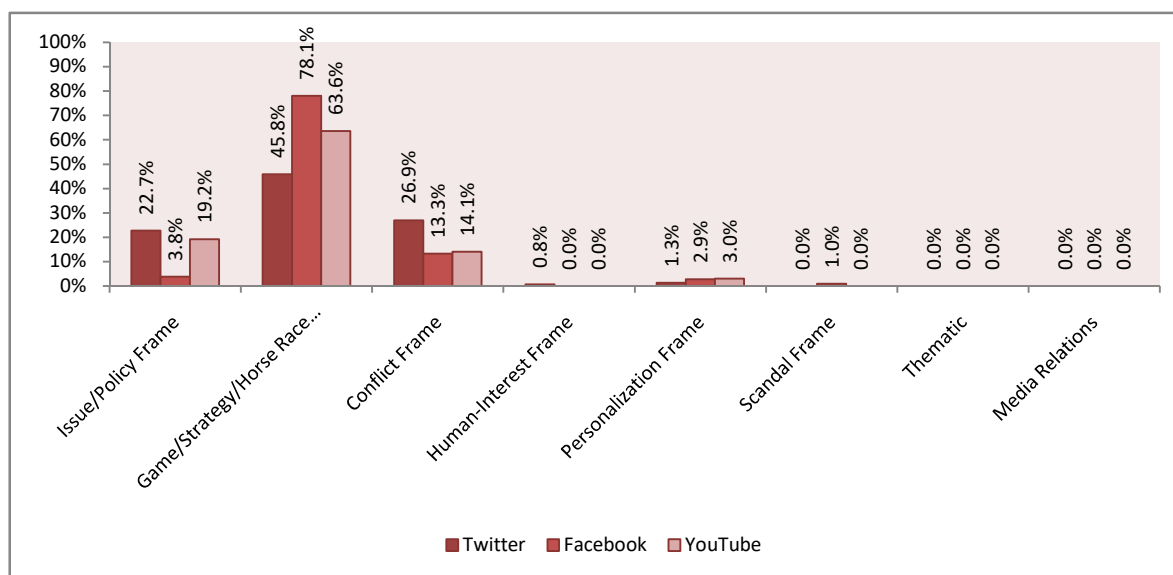


Figure 91 - First/main frame salience in PS's SNS campaign.

As we previously saw, the campaign of PS in the social media, with the exception of Facebook, included the Issues Frame in almost half of the items analyzed. As Figure 92 shows, the three issue categories that were more salient in the news media coverage (Welfare and Family; Finances and Taxes; and Economy and Work) were also the most prominent ones in the PS campaign. These three categories of issues were particularly relevant in the Portuguese electoral campaign due to the economic and political context in which the elections took place. If, on the one hand, it is true that the other three countries that were analyzed in this dissertation (the U.S., Italy and Brazil) were also facing some economic or/and financial problems, it was only Portugal, on the other hand, that requested external help to cope with its financial crisis.

In this election, PS presented itself as the only “credible” alternative to the center-right coalition government. The main campaign messages from this party on the Internet revolved around the need to stop the austerity measures and to restore some social/financial benefits to the citizens. In the case of twitter, the Welfare and Family issue category was the most salient (23.7%). Besides the more general extension and increase of family benefits, PS also proposed some reforms of the Portuguese pension system, mainly about a need to diversify its financial sources. Finances and Taxes was the category of issues most salient in the case of Facebook (44.4%) while on YouTube issues related to Economy and Work were the most prominent (27.5%).

Regarding the remaining categories of issues, their salience was relatively small or even absent from this party's campaign on social media. Two categories (National Security and Environmental Protection) were completely absent from the campaign messages and videos posted on all of the three SNS and three categories (Law and Order, Transport and Energy, and Institutional Design) were only present in a relatively small percentage of Twitter posts. Some other categories worth mentioning are the Immigration, discussed in 11.1% of the Facebook items with political issues, the Health category, included in 7.5% of the YouTube videos and finally the Education category that was also relatively salient on all three platforms.

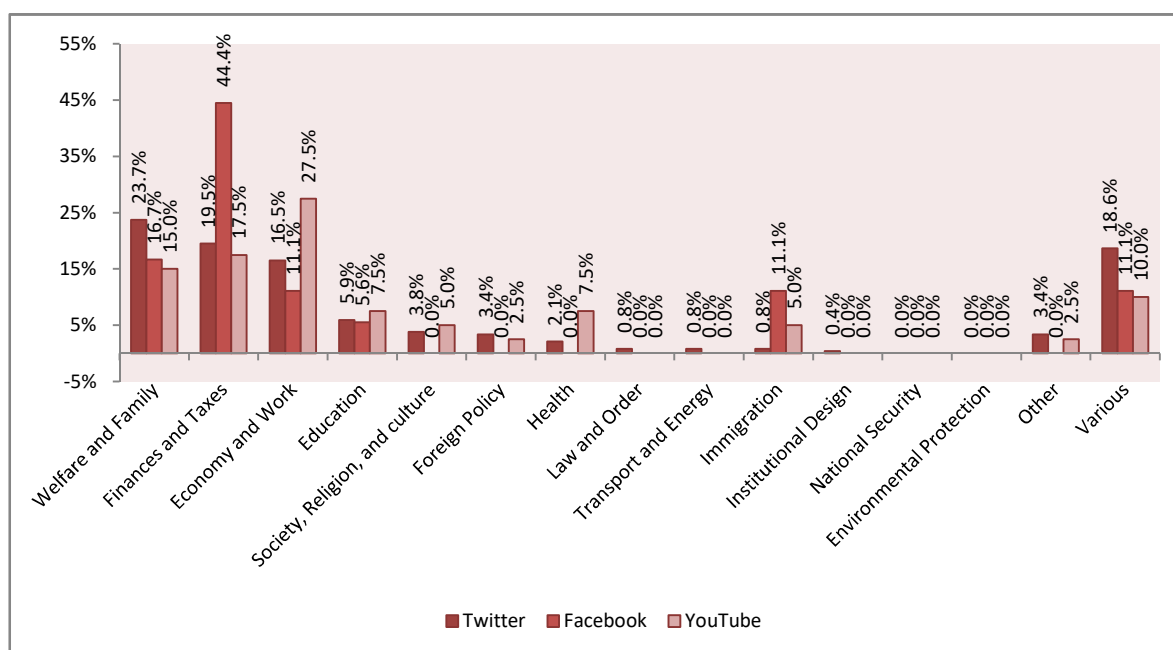


Figure 92 - Nature of issues in PS's SNS campaign.

With respect to the Strategy/Horse-Race sub-frames (Figure 93), the online campaign of PS mainly focused on aspects related to Strategy and the way the party was conducting its campaign. This type of communication was particularly salient on Facebook (74.3%). This sub-frame was also present in 33.9% of the Twitter messages and 32.3% of the YouTube videos uploaded by this party.

The remaining aspects of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame were in general less often observed in the online campaign of PS, with the exception of the Endorsement sub-frame in the case of YouTube. The salience of the Endorsement sub-frame was unusually high in the online campaign made by this party on YouTube. A total of 30.3% of YouTube videos of PS showed public figures expressing support for the Socialist party and its leader. This type of message was also evident, although to a much lower extent, on Twitter (9.7%).

Similar to the messages dealing with endorsements, also the Horse-Race and Turnout sub-frames, but to a much smaller extent, were more salient on YouTube in comparison to the other two SNS. A total of 11.1% of the YouTube videos dealt extensively with parties winning or losing and the consequences of the election results. On Twitter and Facebook the proportion of messages including this aspect were 7% and 4.8% respectively. Regarding aspects related to turnout, which mainly involved messages from the candidates simply asking supporters to vote for them, the percentage of YouTube video on this topic was 12.1%, while on the other two platforms this type of message was prominent in 8% of all Twitter posts and 2.9% of all Facebook posts.

Different to what we observed in the previous section for PaF's online campaign, the SNS campaign of PS very rarely included in its messages live streaming videos of the party's campaign events. From all the three SNS that were analyzed, the Experiencing the Campaign sub-frame was only present in a very small proportion of the Twitter posts (0.4%).

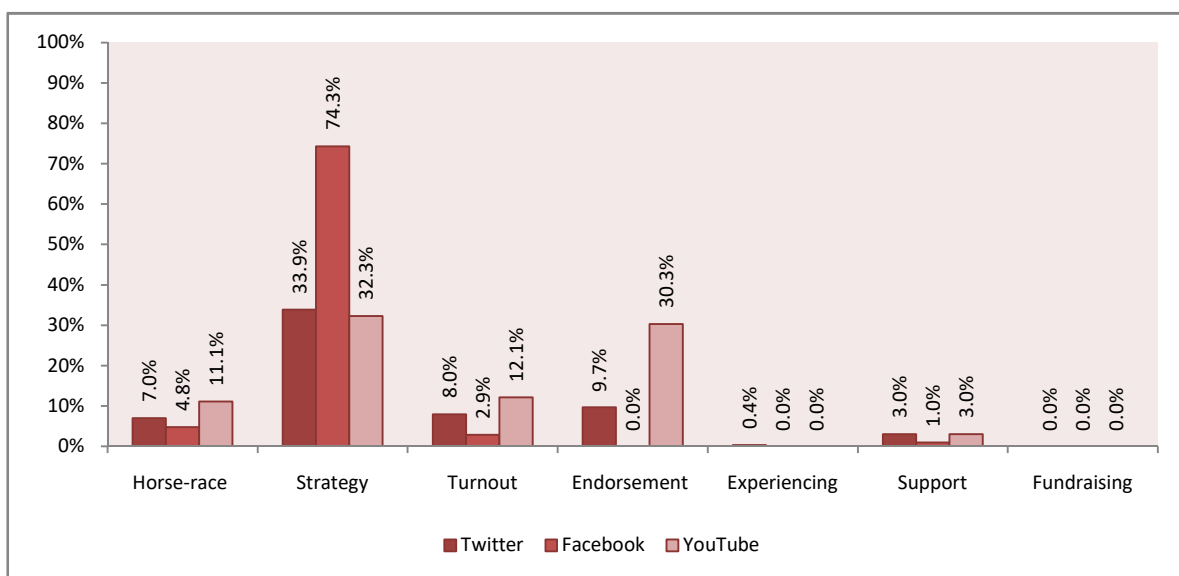


Figure 93 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-race present in PS's SNS campaign.

As we already saw, the salience of the Issues Frame and the Conflict Frame was identical in the online campaign of PS. The results suggested that the online campaign of this party was considerably negative (i.e. focused on attacks of the opponents). As we can see in Figure 94, the proportion of attacks directed at either the opponents' political positions or the opponents' personal traits/values was relatively balanced on the three SNS. In the case of Twitter and YouTube, the majority of attacks (51%) were associated with substantive political issues. In the case of Facebook, however, the salience of attacks on issues was relatively

smaller (41%), with the majority of attacks on this platform (59%) related to the personal traits or values of different political actors.

Overall, not only was the Conflict Frame relatively salient in the online campaign of PS, but it was also significant the proportion of attacks that were aimed at the opponents' political issues. The results suggest that there was an effort of this party to challenge or criticize the issue positions and preferences of at least one of its political opponents. In fact, in the online campaign of PS, a considerable amount of posts and videos with the Issues Frame also had the Conflict Frame included (69.1% on Twitter, 62.5% on YouTube and an expressive 88.9% in the case of Facebook). These numbers suggest that the Socialist Party online campaign paid more attention to the issues presented by their opponents than their own pledges and preferences. It also suggests that a high salience of the Issues Frame on the SNS campaigns does not necessarily reflect a more informative campaign. This happens not only because parties and candidates mainly discuss the issues of their opponents but also because, as we saw, the presence of the Conflict Frame will distract the audience from more substantive information that the message might include.

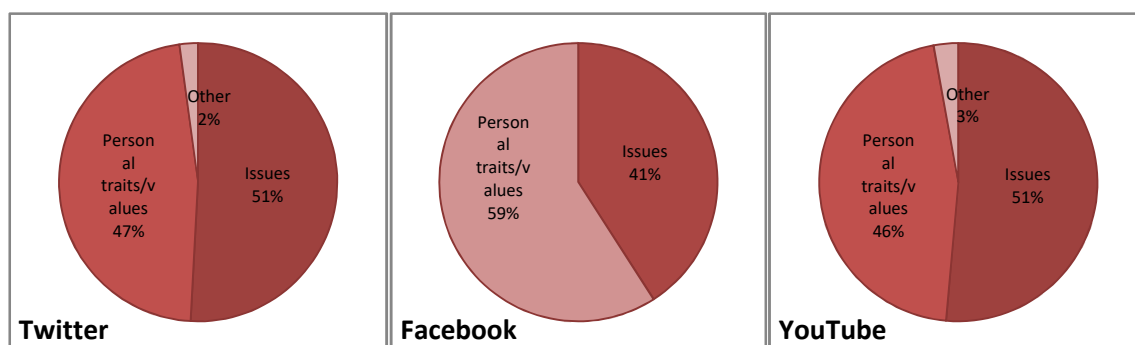


Figure 94 - Type of attack in PS's online campaign.

The analysis of media frames and type of conflict in the social media campaign of PS highlighted some differences between the different online campaigns. As we saw, the PS campaign on Facebook, compared to the one on Twitter, was considerably more focused on strategy aspects and how that party was conducting its campaign. These differences are also reflected by the type of additional information included in the messages of these two SNS (Figure 95). On the one hand, in the case of Facebook, all messages had some sort of additional information. The majority of those messages (77.1%) simply included at least a picture or image. These pictures or images were mostly photos taken at different campaign events and the only discernible purpose of them was to show to the public where the candidates had been on that particular day and what the different campaign events looked like.

The remaining Facebook posts either included a video (21%) or, on very few occasions, a non-journalistic article (1.9%).

On the other hand, in the case of Twitter, non-journalistic articles were included in 39% of the posts. These were mainly articles produced by the party, and published in its main webpage, which offered summaries of the party's campaign and highlighted the main topics that had been discussed by its candidates. To reinforce the campaign messages, or simply due to its incapacity of produce original content every day of the campaign, these articles were often posted twice on Twitter (in consecutive days). This is a very uncommon practice in the SNS campaigns analyzed. Even though it is common that parties and candidates publicize the same article or message in different online platforms (e.g. post the similar content on both Facebook and Twitter), PS was the only Portuguese party that consistently and repeatedly conveyed the same information, on different days, on the same online platform. The remaining Twitter posts either included a video (13.8%), a picture/image (30.9%) or no additional information at all (16.3%).

None of the posts included a live streaming video of the campaign. As we already saw, the sub-frame Experience the Campaign was not present in this campaign and the party relied mostly on images to illustrate to the viewers the different campaign events. Similarly to what we have seen for most of the parties and candidates analyzed in this thesis, there were also no Facebook and Twitter posts that included a link to a journalistic article.

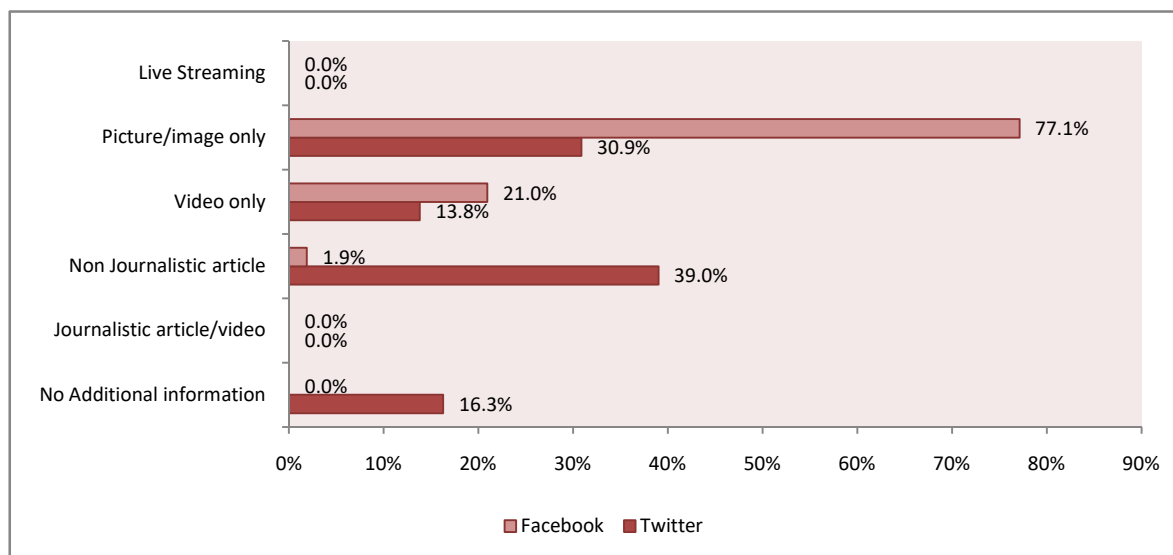


Figure 95 - Additional content also included in PS's Facebook/Twitter posts.

7.4 – Bloco de Esquerda's campaign on the SNS.

The left wing party Bloco the Esquerda (BE), headed by Catarina Martins, was the third most voted party in the Portuguese legislative election of 2015. This party received 10.19% of the

popular vote and elected 19 MPs (11 more than in the previous election). The electoral success of this party contributed to the left leaning composition of the new parliament and, therefore, the formation of a minority PS government in the aftermath of the election. From the four Portuguese parties analyzed it was BE, as we will see, that conducted in 2015 the most issue-focused online campaign.

Regarding the SNS campaign of BE, as we can see in Figure 96, different to the other Portuguese campaigns, the Issues Frame was the most salient aspect in the three SNS analyzed. On all platforms, the discussion of substantive political issues was present in at least half of the coded items. In the case of Twitter 53.6% of the posts included the Issues Frame while on Facebook the amount was slightly lower (50%). In the case of YouTube, a total of 84% of the videos included this media frame. These results clearly suggest that the main objective of the online campaign of this party, particularly with its videos, was to convey and discuss its policy proposals with the electorate.

The Conflict Frame was the second most salient aspect on Twitter, being present in 34.2% of its posts. On the other two platforms, the salience of this frame was considerably lower. On Facebook only 18.9% of the posts included conflict. Even though the Facebook campaign, compared to Twitter, was slightly less focused on substantive political issues, its content was nevertheless considerably less negative. In case of YouTube the Conflict Frame was included in only 14.8% of the videos. Besides being the most used online platform to convey substantive political issues, YouTube was also the SNS with the lowest salience of conflict.

With respect to the other main aspect of this study, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was more salient on Facebook. On this platform, aspects related to horse-race and the way the party was campaigning were almost as salient as the Issues Frame, being present in 46.1% of the posts. On the other two platforms, however, the salience of this media frame was lower, particularly in the case of YouTube. Only 17.3% of the YouTube videos focused on aspects related to the campaign strategies and horse-race. On Twitter, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was included in 33.6% of the items. Overall, the online campaign of BE clearly reflects the potential that new media have to produce more informative campaigns – more focused on issues and less on conflict and strategy – in comparison to the more traditional media that rely on interpretations, preferences and agenda of external actors.

The salience of the remaining four frames included in the analysis was overall, and as expected, low on all three SNS. From these, the most salient aspect was Human-Interest, which was included in 3.8% of the Twitter posts, 6.3% of the Facebook messages and 6.2% of

the YouTube videos. This suggests that BE tried to some extent to link its online campaign to the perceptions and experiences of ordinary citizens. The Personalization and Media-Relation Frames were absent from Facebook and YouTube messages, and were only present in a small proportion of Twitter items (0.4% and 1% respectively). Finally, very few messages included the Scandal Frame, with this aspect being present in only 2.6% of the Twitter posts, 1.5% of Facebook messages and in none of the YouTube videos.

In sum, the analysis of the media frame used by BE in the social media shows that this party conducted an exceptionally informative online campaign. Not only did a considerable number of messages include substantive political issues' information but also the amount of content emphasizing aspects related to conflict and strategy was relatively small, when compared to what we have been observing in other online campaigns and news coverage of political events. This party's social media campaign is a good showcase for the potential of Internet to produce more informative and less negative campaigns.

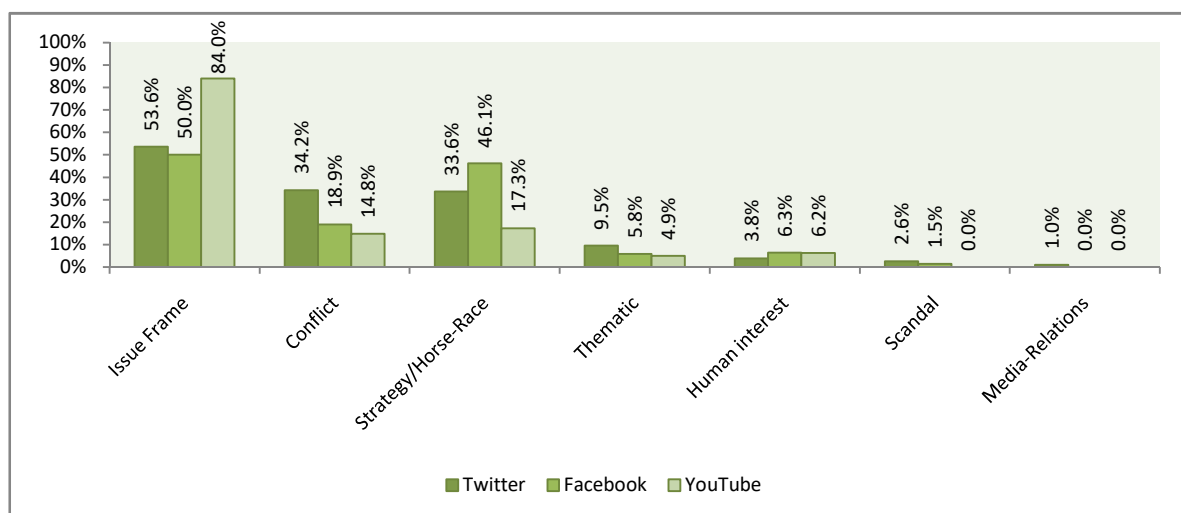


Figure 96 – Frames salience in BE's SNS campaign.

When we look at the first frames used in the SNS campaign of BE the overall picture does not change considerably (Figure 97). The Issues Frame remains the most salient aspect on Twitter (34.4%) and YouTube (79%). In the case of Facebook, however, there was a higher number of messages that had Strategy/Horse-Race Frame as its first frame (41.3%) compared to Issues (37.9%). This means that even though the proportion of Facebook messages that included the Issues Frame was higher than Strategy/Horse-Race, when we treat the media frames as exclusive and only look at the first aspect presented in the message, the latter becomes slightly more salient on this SNS.

The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the second most frequent media frame on both Twitter (26.6%) and YouTube (11.1%). On all of the three SNS, the number of stories including either the Issues or Strategy/Horse-Race as the main frame was always higher than the stories primarily focused on Conflict. In general conflict was on very few occasions the first frame used by BE in its online messages. Overall, the Conflict Frame was the primary aspect in 19.9% of the Twitter posts, 10.7% of the Facebook messages and 6.2% of the YouTube videos.

The remaining frames, as expected, had either a very low salience as the main aspect of the messages or were completely absent from the online campaign of this party. It is also relevant to mention that a relatively high number of messages, particularly on Twitter, did not have any of our predetermined media frames as their central aspect. A total of 15.4% of Twitter posts focused on aspects not related to the Portuguese election or campaign. BE did not use the social media exclusively for campaigning but also to inform the public about events not related to the Portuguese election that were published as articles (similar to journalistic news pieces) on the main webpage. Overall these results further reinforce the exceptionally informative campaign that this party conducted on the social media, particularly through YouTube videos. In this social media, eight out of ten videos had the primary purpose of conveying the party's positions on different political topics. As we will see, also the nature of the issues discussed in this party's online campaign were relatively diverse.

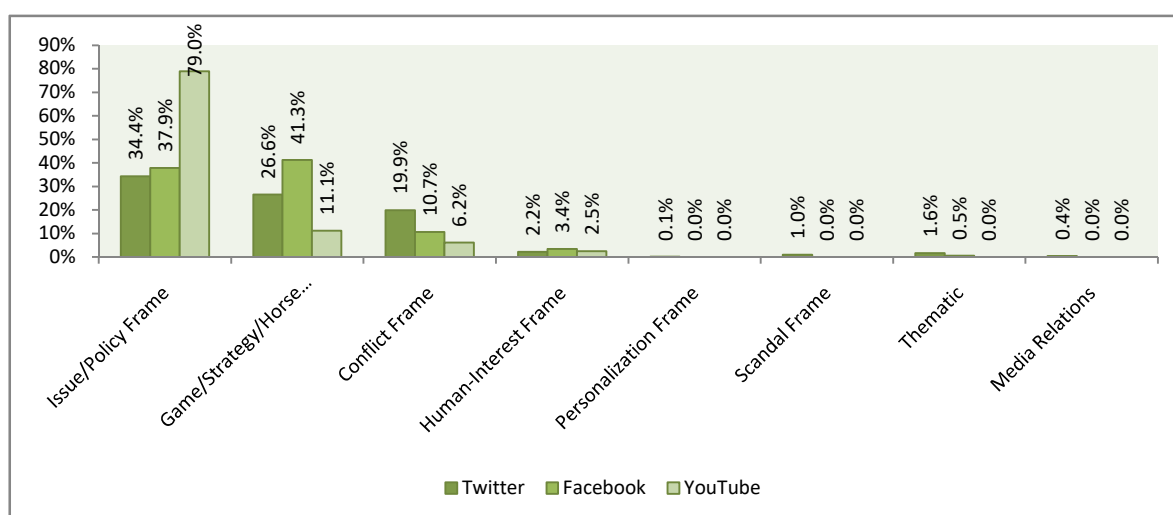


Figure 97 - First/main frame salience in BE's SNS campaign.

As we can see in Figure 98, all categories of political issues were to some extent discussed on at least one of the three SNS. These categories had a relatively balanced salience, suggesting that the BE campaign, besides conveying issues frequently, made an

effort to cover a large array of political topics. This diversity of issues is also suggested by the relatively high number of posts and videos (5.3% on Twitter, 8.7% on Facebook and 11.8% on YouTube) that did not clearly belong to any of the predefined categories and were therefore coded in the category “Other”. Some of these messages proposed, for example, the freedom to share digital content on the Internet or the use of free open-source software in public administration.

The three most salient categories of issues were once again the Economy and Work; Welfare and Finances; and the Finances and Taxes. This reflects the party’s campaign against austerity policies. BE was in favor of restoring or increasing citizen’s social benefits and the public debt restructuring, offering a lot of the policy proposals around those lines.

From all of the four Portuguese parties analyzed in this chapter, BE was the most outspoken party in the 2015 election regarding the refugee problem in Europe. Immigration was the fourth most salient issue’s category in BE’s online campaign. From all the posts and videos that included the Issues Frame, the proportion of posts and videos where Immigration issues dominated were 9.9% for Twitter, 3.9% for Facebook and 7.4% in the case of YouTube. Contrary to the other parties analyzed, particularly PaF and CDU, which evaded the discussion of this particular issue, the BE repeatedly positioned itself in favor of more permissive and welcoming policies towards the refugees. During the electoral campaign, this party also organized pro-refugees demonstrations and other events, such as street art initiatives, clearly stating its position on this, at the time, highly polarized issue.

The category that received less attention from BE in its online campaign was Law and Order, a topic mostly associated with the agenda of more right leaning parties. This category was only present in only one of the Twitter posts. This particular post was linked to a visit of one of BE candidates to an overcrowded prison in Azores and his pledge to resume an old, but continuously halted, project to build a new prison for this region. Also the National Security category received relatively low salience in the campaign, being the most salient on YouTube with 1.5% of the videos with issues focusing on this aspect.

One final aspect important to mention is the small number of messages that focused on more than one type of issues, particularly in the case of YouTube (1.5%). The majority of the videos of this party focused on very concrete proposals (most of the time single proposals) for specific policy topics. These videos were usually relatively short and showed what appeared to be ordinary citizens informing the viewers about one of the proposals of the party. Even though these proposals were not thoroughly discussed, these videos were nevertheless an

original alternative to convey the party's issue agenda in a very simple and straightforward way.

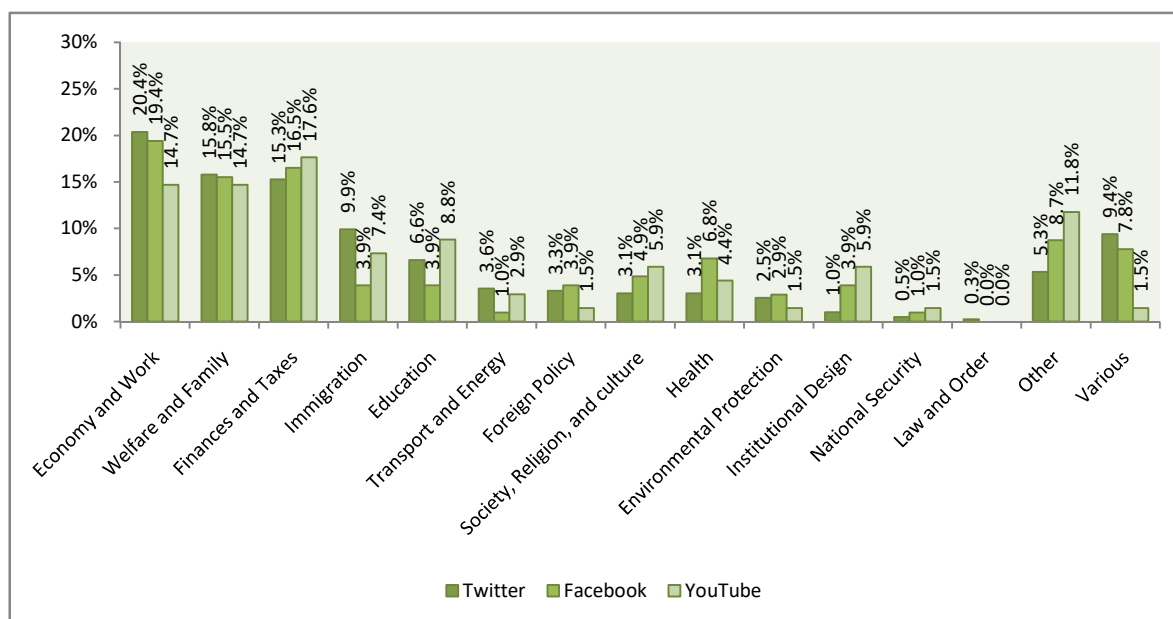


Figure 98 - Nature of issues in BE's SNS campaign.

Even though, as we saw, the Strategy/Horse-Race was not very salient in the SNS campaign of BE, it is nevertheless interesting to see which specific aspects of this media frame were used. As we can see in Figure 99 there were some differences between the three online platforms regarding the salience of the different Strategy/Horse-Race sub-aspects. In the case of Twitter and Facebook, the most salient sub-frame was Strategy. Posts dealing extensively with the way this party was conducting its campaign amounted to 19.8% of Twitter posts and 26.7% of the Facebook messages. The salience of this sub-frame was, however, very low on YouTube (6.2%). In general, all of the Strategy/Horse-Race sub-frames were relatively less often used in YouTube, with the Turnout (11.1%) being the most salient of them. The few YouTube videos of BE that did not convey the party's policy proposals instead mostly focused on encouraging electoral participation. The Turnout sub-frame was also present in 12.2% of the Facebook messages and in 7.8% of the posts in Twitter.

Messages dealing extensively with the Horse-Race aspects of the campaign were shown mainly on Twitter (6.1%). However, different to the traditional media news coverage, those messages were not related to the position of the party in the opinion polls but were instead posts about the BE “winning” in other aspects, such as Twitter popularity or the number of viewers in televised debates. BE not only abstained from discussing its placement in the polls but it also criticized, in an article published on the party's website and circulated in its social media accounts, the attractiveness of this type of information for the journalists.

The sub-frame Experiencing the Campaign also received some visibility in the SNS campaign of BE, particularly on Facebook (7.3%). However, contrary to PaF's online campaign, these messages were not live streaming videos of the campaign. Instead, these posts were either recorded videos of the campaign debates and other types of participation in television programs, or posts offering alternative or innovative ways for the public to follow and experience the campaign of BE. One example of this was the posts informing and explaining how people could follow the campaign through a popular instant messaging mobile phone application.

The remaining sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race had relatively low visibility in the campaign. None of the messages included fundraising aspects, which is not surprising since Portuguese electoral law does not allow the public funding of political parties. Moreover, very few messages dealt with endorsements for the party from public figures and even less messages asked for the support of party followers in the campaign. Overall the results reinforce that conveying strategy and horse-race aspects were not a major concern of BE in its online campaign.

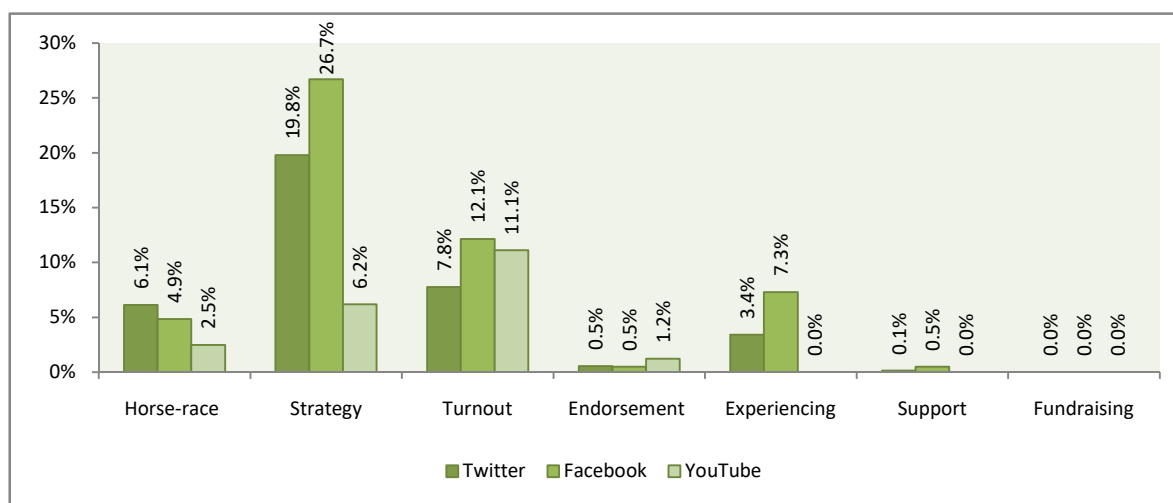


Figure 99 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-race present in BE's SNS campaign.

Regarding the types of conflict in the BE campaign, the most predominant attacks were, on all three SNS, the ones aimed at the opponents' political issues (Figure 100). This was more salient on YouTube, where Issues attacks represented 75% of the Conflict Frame. This might be to a certain extent also an outcome of the more issues-centered campaign conducted by the BE on that platform. Facebook had the most balanced campaign regarding the different types of conflict. On this platform, the attacks that focused on political issues were slightly higher (51%) than the ones attacking the opponent's personal traits or values (49%). In the case of Twitter, 59% of all attacks present on this SNS concerned the

opponents' political issues, with only 26% of the attacks revolving around personal traits or values. There was also a considerable proportion of attacks on Twitter (15%) but they were of a different kind, which mainly related to the fact that the Twitter campaign of BE had a relatively high number of posts not strictly related to the Portuguese elections.

Overall, what we found regarding conflict in the BE campaign was that this frame was not only considerably less used than the Issues Frame but also that the bulk of this conflict focused on challenging and criticizing the opponent's positions on substantive political issues. These results further reinforce the importance that the presentation and discussion of political issues had in this party's campaign.

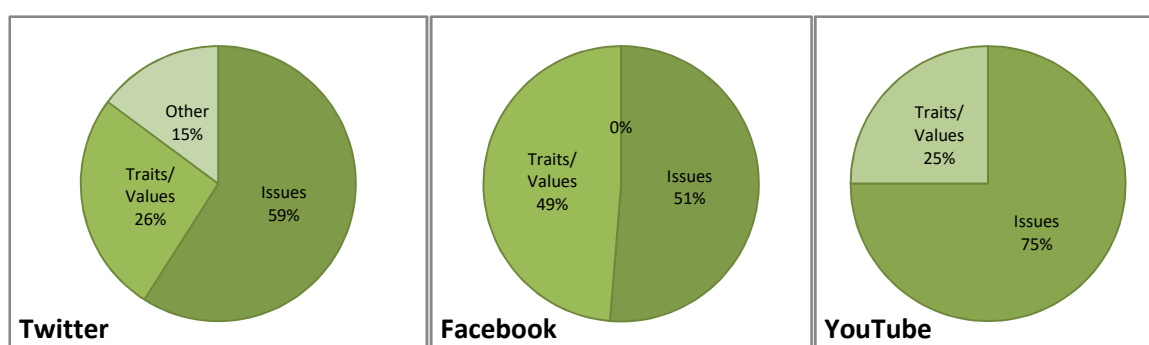


Figure 100 - Type of attack in BE's SNS campaign.

Regarding the additional information used in the SNS campaign of BE, there were some differences between Twitter and Facebook (Figure 101). On Facebook, all of the messages included some sort of additional information. The most common type of additional information on Facebook was videos (51.5%) that mainly conveyed the party's policy proposals. In fact, from the 106 videos included on this platform, 70 videos (66%) dealt extensively with substantive political issues. The second most common type of additional information in Facebook was non-journalistic articles, which were included in 25.7% of the posts. These were mostly articles published on the website of this party that, in the majority of occasions (60.4%), also dealt with substantive political issues. The remaining Facebook messages (22.8%) simply included campaign photos or images.

With respect to Twitter, the most common type of additional information included in the posts was non-journalistic articles, included in 54.8% of the posts. The majority of those articles (57.2%) also discussed extensively substantive political issues. The second most common type of additional information on Twitter was videos, included in 17.7% of the posts. The majority of those videos (63.1%) also included the Issues Frame. The remaining posts on this platform either did not include any type of additional information (15.4%) or

simply included a photo or image (12%). From these posts with photos or images only 2.3% were focused on political issues.

Overall, the frame analysis of the campaign conducted by BE on the SNS revealed an exceptional effort of this party to discuss and convey to the electorate substantive political issues through these online platforms. The Issues Frame was the most salient aspect of the campaign and was included in at least half of the social media items analyzed, comprising a large array of topics. Even though this campaign was exceptionally informative, it is nevertheless a clear and positive example of how the campaigns directly made by the parties or candidates on SNS can extensively differ from the traditional news coverage of political events.

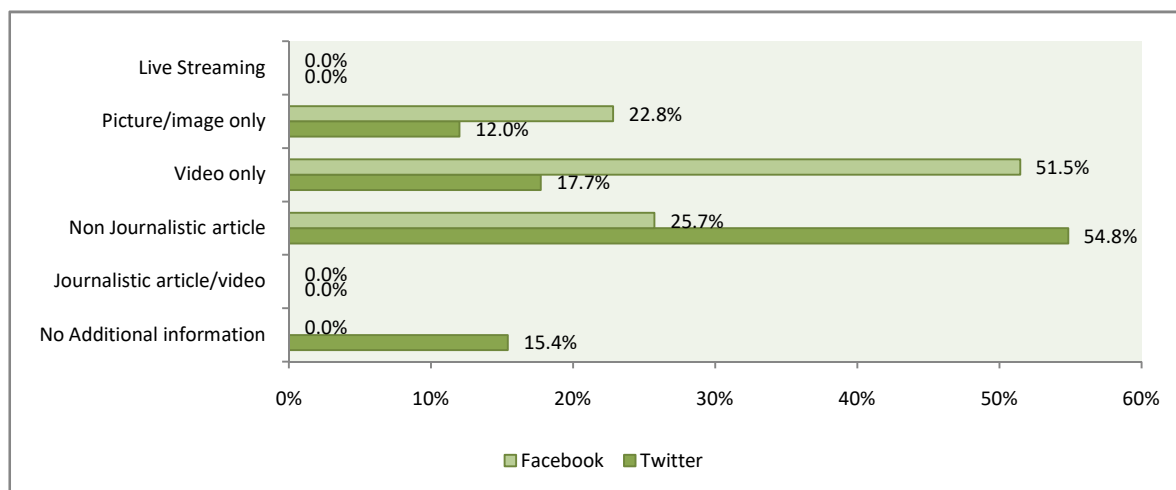


Figure 101 - Additional content also included in BE's Facebook/Twitter posts.

7.5 – *Coligação Democrática Unitária'* campaign on the SNS.

The last Portuguese party, and respective SNS campaign, analyzed in this chapter is the Coligação Democrática Unitária (CDU). CDU is a coalition of two left-wing parties, the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Green Party (PEV). The leader of the coalition in the 2015 Portuguese elections was Jerónimo de Sousa, the secretary-general of the Communist Party since 2004. In the 2015 election, this party received 8.25% of the popular vote and elected a total of 17 MPs, one more than in the previous legislature. These MPs became determined to guarantee the parliament's support for the minority government headed by the Portuguese Socialist party.

Regarding the online campaign of CDU the results reveal some differences between the content on YouTube and the other two SNS (Figure 102). On the one hand, in the case of

Twitter and Facebook, the considerations about Strategy and Horse-Race dominated the online campaign of this party. The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was particularly salient on Facebook, being included in 76.2% of the total amount of posts. CDU used Facebook essentially to inform the users about their campaign events and to give them an idea of what those events looked like. In the case of Twitter, more than half of the posts (54.7%) dealt extensively with aspects related to the campaign strategies and horse-race. On the other hand, on YouTube, from all of the three main media frames analyzed in this thesis, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the least frequent one, being included in less than half of the videos analyzed (46.7%).

The most salient aspect on YouTube was political issues, being discussed in 66.7% of the videos. On the other two platforms, however, the percentage of posts dealing extensively with substantive political issues was not as salient. On Facebook, only 28.7% of the items included the Issues Frame while in the case of Twitter the proportion of messages with this frame was even lower (23.9%). Overall, these results suggest that the online campaign of CDU relied mostly on videos to convey and discuss the party's political preferences and proposals.

Even though YouTube had a considerably higher percentage of content dealing extensively with substantive political issues, in comparison to the other two platforms, the Conflict Frame was also more salient on that platform. On YouTube, the majority of videos of CDU (53.3%) also showed some sort of conflict between political actors. This aspect was considerably less salient on the other two SNS. On Facebook and Twitter, the proportions of posts showing conflict were only 18.2% and 15.7%, respectively.

Of the remaining four media frames, only the Human-Interest aspect had some salience in the online campaign made on YouTube and Facebook. The Human-Interest Frame was particularly salient on YouTube, being included in 23.3% of the videos. This is an unusually high figure for this particular aspect which suggests that this party tried, to a certain extent, to appeal to the public's emotions with its campaign videos. These were mostly videos that aimed at emphasizing the consequences and negative impact of the austerity measures on ordinary citizens. These videos focused extensively on the personal experiences and first-person testimonies of individuals facing some specific problems, such as unemployment, emigration or poverty.

The Scandal Frame was absent from the online campaign of CDU. Not a single Twitter or Facebook post or YouTube video of this party dealt with scandals involving politicians. The Personalization Frame only occurred once on Twitter and the same was the

case for the Media-Relations Frame on Facebook. While the Personalization post just informed the online community that the leader of this coalition had a domestic cat, the Media-Relations post had a more serious tone and accused the Portuguese press of distorting their campaign. This distortion was not, however, related to the party's issue agenda but, similarly to what was frequently done by M5S in the Italian case, CDU accused the journalists of intentionally underestimating, with the news articles' photos, the numbers of supporters attending this party's campaign rallies.

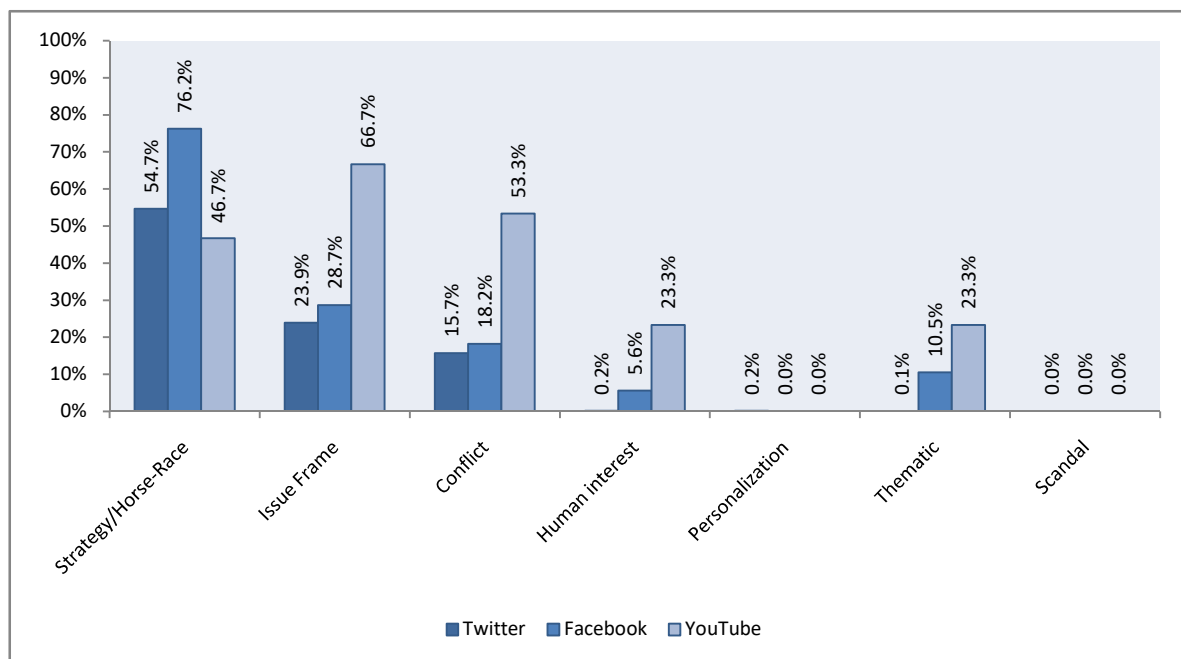


Figure 102 - Frames salience in CDU's SNS campaign.

Even though the majority of YouTube videos included the Issues Frame (66.7%), only 1/5 of the YouTube videos dealt primarily with that aspect (Figure 103). When we look at the first frames used in the SNS campaign of CDU, Strategy/Horse-Race becomes the most salient aspect on YouTube, being the first frame presented in 40% of the videos. These results reinforce the importance that strategy and horse-race aspects had in the online campaign of CDU, even in the case of YouTube where, as we saw, the Issues Frame had been overall the most frequent aspect. In addition to the Issues Frame, the Conflict Frame also becomes considerably less salient on YouTube when we look only at the first aspects discussed in the videos. Even though more than half of the YouTube videos included the Conflict Frame, only one out of ten videos dealt primarily with that aspect.

Regarding the first frames included on YouTube, it is interesting to see that the Human-Interest was the second most salient aspect on this platform. This frame was the first aspect conveyed in 26.7% of the videos. This means that when a YouTube video of CDU included the Human-Interest Frame, it was invariably done at the beginning of the video, as the first and therefore primary aspect of the message. These videos with the Human-Interest Frame also dealt, later on, with substantive political issues and policy proposals from the party. As we saw, the online campaign of this party often brought a concrete human case to better illustrate its policy proposals.

On the other two SNS, Twitter and Facebook, the three main media frames (Strategy/Horse-Race, Issue and Conflict Frames) remained, in the same order, the most salient aspects of the campaign. The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the main aspect discussed in 54.7% of the Twitter posts and 76.2% of the Facebook messages. This means that when a Twitter or Facebook message of CDU included the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, this frame was almost every time also the first/main aspect conveyed in those messages. The Issues Frame was the second most salient aspect on these two SNS, being the first aspect conveyed in 18.8% of the Twitter posts and 16.1% of the Facebook messages. Finally, conflict between campaign actors was an aspect primarily discussed in only 6.3% of the Facebook messages and 14% of the Twitter posts.

Finally, the remaining frames (Personalization, Media Relations and Scandal) were, as expected, hardly ever used as the first and main aspect of the messages and videos. There were however, in the case of Twitter, a considerable amount of posts (13.1%) that did not include any of the pre-determined campaign frames in this study. These were often very short messages, mainly quotes from the candidates, which were not clearly related to the election.

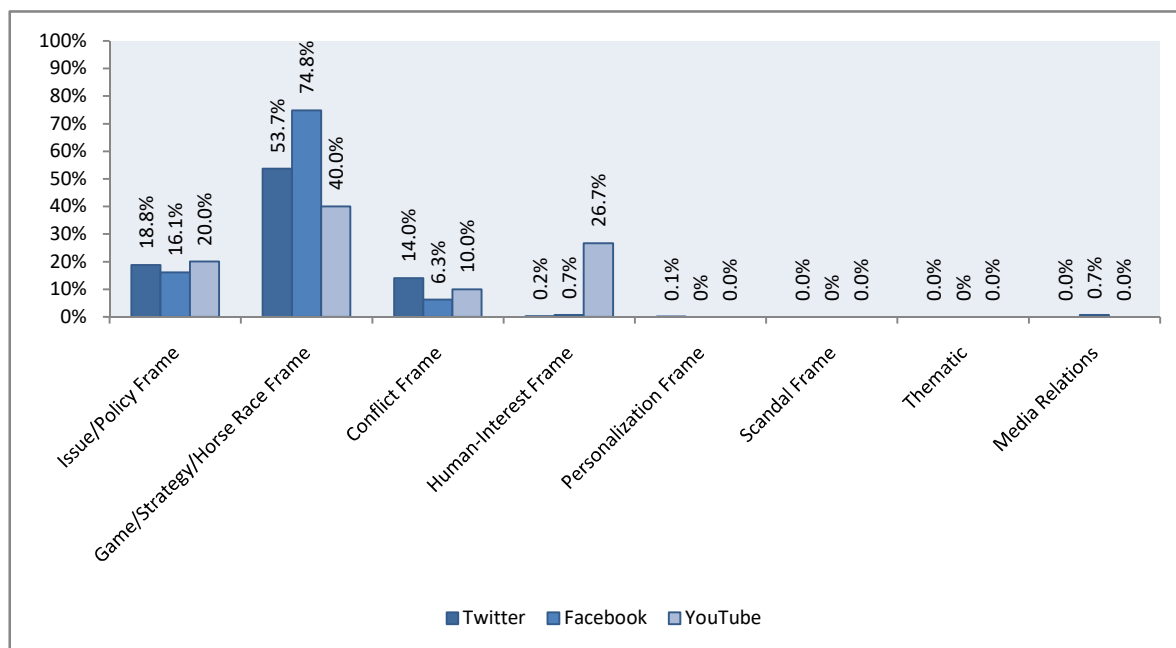


Figure 103 - First/main frame salience in CDU's SNS campaign.

Even though, as we saw, the Issues Frame was not particularly salient in the online campaign of CDU, it is nevertheless important to look at the type of issues that received more attention in the SNS messages and videos of this party. As we can see in Figure 104, the most salient category on all three SNS was Economy and Work. This category was the main topic in more than 30% of the items dealing with issues. These Economy and Work messages of CDU mostly revolved around a need to stimulate the Portuguese economy and reform or invest in the national industry in order to create jobs and reduce the import of foreign goods.

Another category of issues prominent in the online campaign of CDU was Finances and Taxes. Finances and Taxes was the second most salient category of issues on the three SNS analyzed, being however more salient on YouTube. On this platform, one-fourth of the videos dealing extensively with political issues focused on Finances and Taxes. On the other two platforms, the proportion of posts dealing mainly with this category of issues was 19.2% on Twitter and 9.8% on Facebook. The online messages of CDU in this area were essentially policy proposals to cope with the high government debt which amounted to 129% of the Portuguese GDP in 2015. Some examples of these proposals were to reject the Fiscal Stability Treaty; to restructure the Portuguese public debt; and to develop a financial transactions' tax in order to increase government revenues.

Welfare and Family issues were also relatively salient in the Twitter and Facebook campaigns, particularly Twitter. The Welfare and Family was the predominant category of issues in 16.3% of the Twitter messages dealing with substantive political aspects. On

YouTube, however, there were two categories of issues (Health and Society-Culture) that received more attention than the Welfare and Family aspects, being both the dominant topic of issues in 10% of the YouTube videos discussing political issues. It was noteworthy the importance that this party placed on culture during its electoral campaign. Not only did CDU frequently express a will to immediately allocate 1% of the Government budget to Culture (and continue increasing this figure progressively) but also the majority of its campaign events included musical performances of various artists.

Two categories of issues, Law and Order and Immigration, were not present in any of the three online platforms as the main issue topics of the campaign posts and videos. While the absence of the former is not surprising, given that Law and Order is mostly considered a right-wing issue topic (Budge et al., 2001, p.22), the lack of immigration related issues is far more intriguing considering how salient the EU refugee crisis was at the time both in the public opinion and news media. In general, in its campaign, CDU avoided addressing more controversial and polarizing issues, focusing instead on more evocative and consensual proposals for its electorate (e.g. higher wages; better pensions; more social benefits) or simply replacing the discussion of concrete issues with the communication of more ambiguous and harmless values (e.g. restore the ideals of the Democratic Revolution of 1974 or the Portuguese Constitution). There were also three categories (National Security; Institutional Design; and Foreign Policy) that were absent from the campaign made in two of the analyzed social media (Facebook and YouTube).

Finally, there are other two aspects related to the type of issues included in the CDU online campaign that are worth mentioning. The first one is that a considerable amount of Facebook posts included issues of more than one category (24.4%). This suggests that CDU took advantage of the longer written messages that Facebook allows to convey and discuss, at once, more than one type of political issues. The second is that, despite the fact that the Green Party was a member of this coalition, the environmental issues did not rank particularly high in the campaign/agenda of CDU for this election, particularly on Twitter.

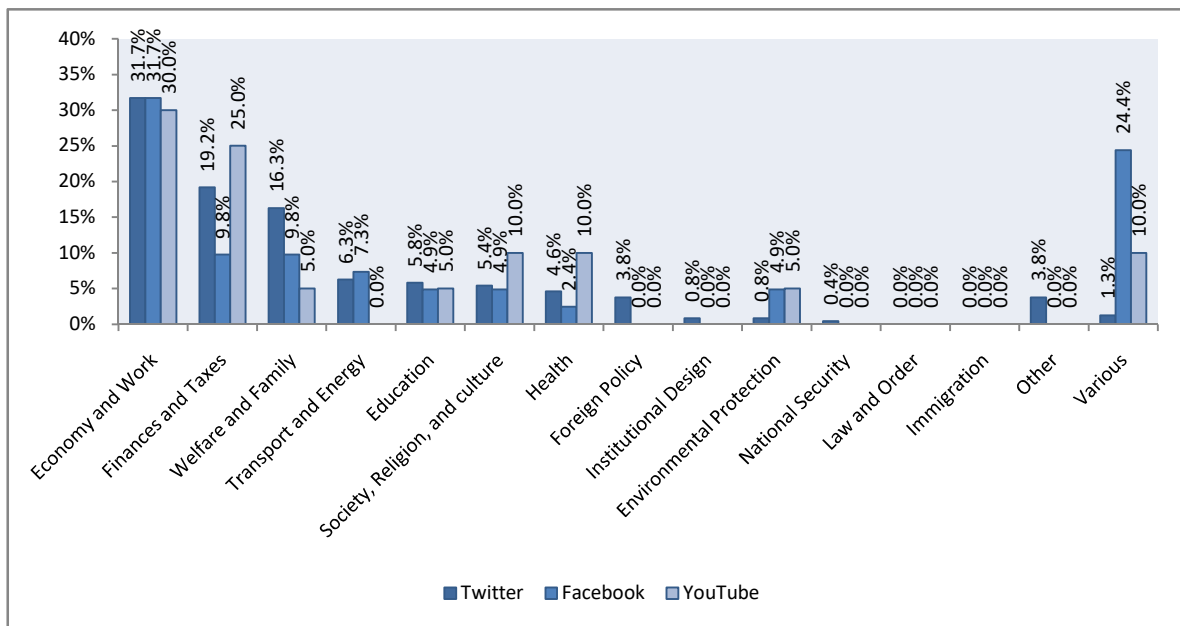


Figure 104 - Nature of issues in CDU's SNS campaign.

With respect to the presence and salience of the different sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race, as we can see in Figure 105, there were some differences between the three SNS. These results suggest that this party used these platforms in distinct ways and for different purposes. On Twitter and Facebook the Strategy sub-frame was the most salient aspect in the campaign of CDU. This party used these two platforms mostly to inform the public about its campaign events and agenda. This sub-frame was included in 39.5% of the Twitter posts and in 51.7% of the Facebook messages. These aspects were less salient on YouTube where only 20% of the videos dealt extensively with the way the party was conducting its campaign.

In contrast, on YouTube, the most salient sub-frame of Strategy/Horse-Race was the Turnout. 30% of the YouTube videos focused on the party's candidates asking citizens to vote for them. On the two other online platforms the proportion of messages dealing with this type of aspect was substantially lower (8.4% on Twitter and 11.9% on Facebook). Nevertheless, the Turnout was still the second most salient sub-frame in the campaign that CDU made on Twitter. These results reflect the concerns of this party with strategic voting, particularly the importance that these considerations were having in the rhetoric of PS. On the one hand, the Socialist Party presented itself as the only viable alternative for the left, suggesting that the electorate should strategically vote for them in order to guarantee the electoral defeat of the

center-right coalition. On the other hand, the campaign of CDU made a clear effort to deconstruct this idea by emphasizing the importance of casting a sincere and honest vote.

The Horse-Race sub-frame was not particularly salient in SNS campaign of CDU. Nonetheless, 6.8% of Twitter posts dealt extensively with this aspect. On Facebook and YouTube the proportion of posts and videos that included this sub-frame was 2.8% and 3.3%, respectively. These posts mainly focused on the consequences of the election, possible governing negotiations, but also opinion polls' results. In its campaign, CDU was very critical of news media's polls, suggesting that those polls were intentionally manipulated by the traditional media to underestimate their real strength.

Finally, regarding the remaining sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-Race, only the Endorsement had some visibility in the online campaign made by this party on Facebook. On this platform, 14% of the posts showed messages of support for this party from Portuguese public figures. There were also a small percentage of Facebook messages (2.2%) that included live campaign videos for the public to follow this party's campaign events. Finally, there were a few Twitter messages and videos on YouTube (1.1% and 3.3% respectively) that asked the party's online followers to help with the party's campaign efforts.

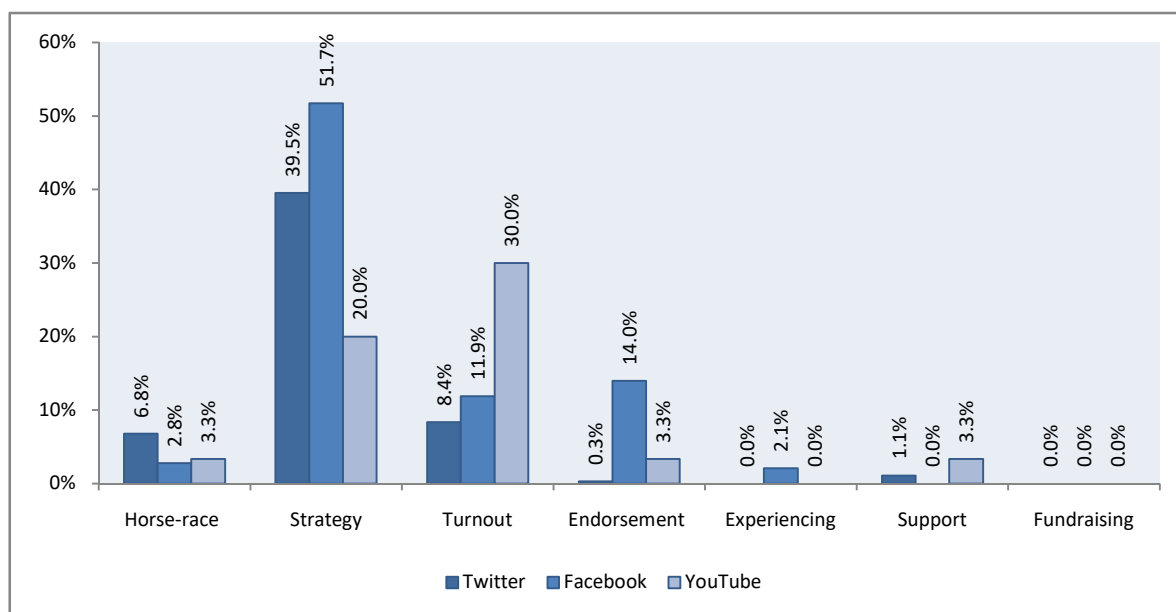


Figure 105 - Sub-frames of Strategy/Horse-race present in CDU's SNS campaign.

As we saw before, there were some differences between the three social media regarding the presence of the Conflict Frame. In general, this frame was not a very salient aspect in the online campaign that CDU made on Twitter and Facebook. On YouTube, even though there was a considerable number of videos that included conflict between politically

actors, this aspect was only on a few occasions the first and main aspect of those videos. When we look at the type of attack included in the online campaigns of CDU, we can also observe some differences between Twitter and the other two SNS (Figure 106).

On Twitter, the most salient type of attack was the one concerning the opponents' personal traits or values (41%). The attacks on the opponents' political issues were less frequent, corresponding to 34% of the Twitter posts that included conflict. On this platform there was also a relatively high proportion of more ambiguous attacks (25%) that were neither plainly connected to the opponents' political issues nor their traits and values. The targets of this party's attacks were, almost exclusively, the Socialist Party and the center-right coalition (PaF), the two main political forces in the election.

On YouTube and Facebook, unlike Twitter, the majority of attacks focused on the opponents' political issues. The issues' attacks represented 61% of the conflict aspect present on Facebook messages and 69% on YouTube. This difference in the salience of the issue attacks, between these two SNS and the Twitter, is in a way also related to the fact that, as we saw, the Issues Frame was more salient in the Facebook and YouTube campaigns, particularly in the latter. In the YouTube campaign, 70% of the videos that included the Issues Frame also presented some sort of conflict between political actors. The attacks on the personal traits and values of the other candidates corresponded to 35% of the conflict aspect shown in the Facebook messages, and 25% in the YouTube videos. On both platforms, there were very few attacks not clearly related to the opponents' personal values/traits or issues (4% on Facebook and 6% on YouTube).

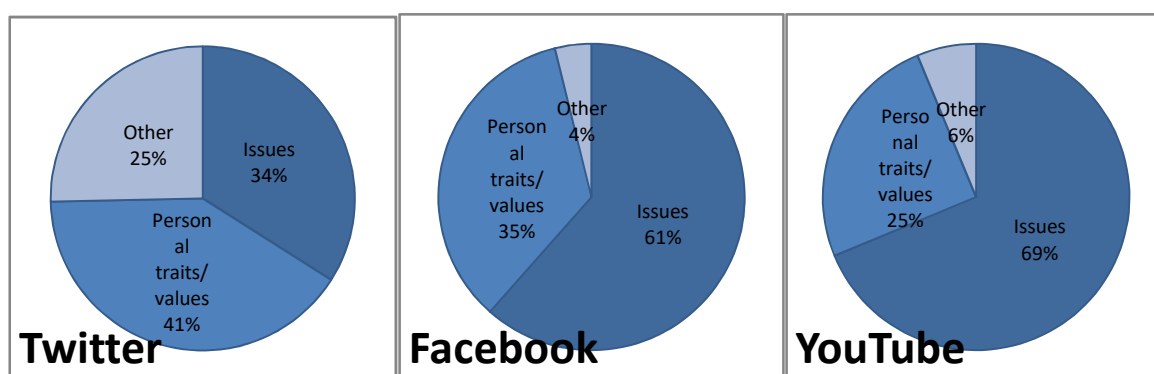


Figure 106 - Type of attack in CDU's online campaign.

The last aspect of the online campaign of CDU analyzed in this section is the type of additional information included in the Twitter and Facebook messages. As we can see in Figure 107, the majority of the Twitter posts (61.1%) did not include any sort of additional

information. The CDU had a “sound-bite” style of campaign on Twitter, where a considerable amount of posts simply included a quote from speeches and debates of the party’s main candidates. This is a “more-quantity/less-quality” communication approach that has the advantage of requiring less time and effort to generate SNS content (the Twitter campaign of PdL in Italy was another good example of this type Twitter campaign). The downside of this approach is, sometimes, the generation of repetitive and dull content that might discourage part of the audience to continuously follow it.

When the Twitter messages included additional information, this additional content was, on the majority of these occasions, a picture. Those pictures, included in 31.7% of the Twitter messages, were mainly photos taken from the different campaign events showing either the party’s main candidates or its supporters. There was also a small proportion of Twitter posts (7.1%) that included videos. None of those videos, however, conveyed any information about political issues or the party’s policy proposals. Instead, similar to the campaign photos, these videos mainly focused on how the party was campaigning (mainly showing short musical performances in the rallies of the party). Finally, there were only two Twitter posts that included a link to a non-journalistic article and none of the Twitter messages included live streaming videos or articles published by the traditional news media.

On Facebook, different to Twitter, only 7% of the messages did not include any sort of additional content. The majority of the campaign messages of CDU in this online platform had a picture or image (60.8%). These pictures and images were not only photos taken from the different campaign events, but also flyers advertising some of those events and images with endorsement messages for CDU from some Portuguese public figures.

The second most frequent type of additional content in the Facebook campaign of CDU were videos, included in 21% of the items. Contrary to the Twitter videos that were exclusively focused on the campaign events' appearance, the majority of the videos on Facebook (70%) conveyed and discussed substantive political issues. There were also some Facebook posts that included non-journalistic articles (10.5%). Similar to the videos shown in Facebook, also the major part of the articles included on this online platform focused on substantive political issues. Finally, there was one live streaming video included in one of the Facebook posts of CDU and none of the posts on this platform had a link to a non-journalistic article.

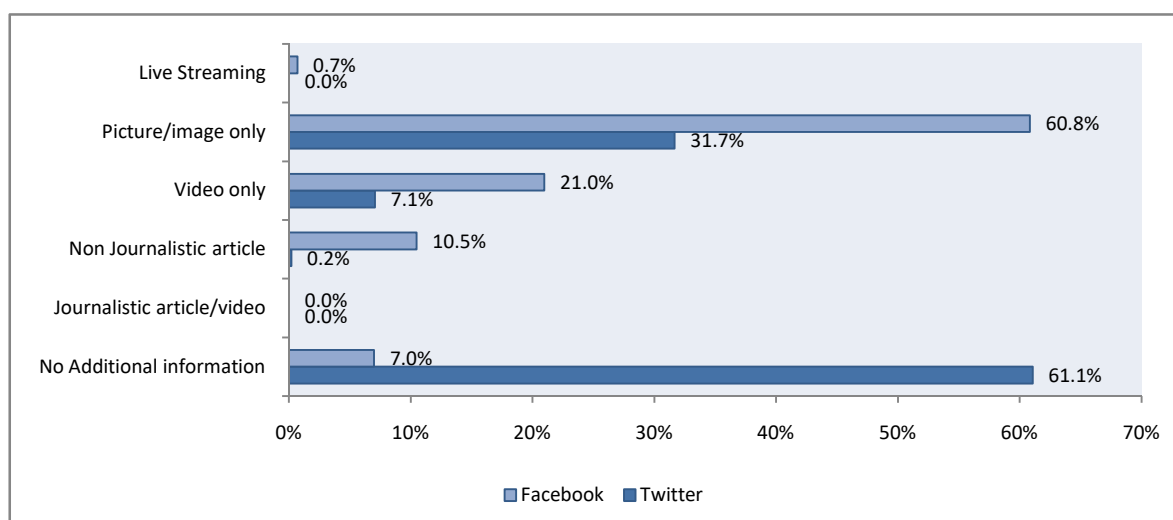


Figure 107 – Additional content also included in CDU's Facebook/Twitter posts

7.6 – The Portuguese legislative elections of 2015, uninformative news or hollow campaign?

The previous sections of this chapter examined how the 2015 Portuguese electoral campaign was framed by both journalists, in the news coverage made in the press, and the main Portuguese parties, on their official social media accounts. Regarding the traditional media news coverage, we saw that the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was again the most salient aspect in the news stories. The number of newspaper articles dealing extensively with substantive political issues was considerably lower than the stories focusing on parties' winning and losing and how those parties were conducting their campaigns. In addition to this, the number of news articles that included some sort of conflict between the campaign actors was identical to the number of articles that included the Issues Frame, especially in *Jornal de Notícias*.

There were however as we saw, in the Portuguese case, considerable differences between the four main parties regarding the way they chose to frame their own campaigns on social media. Even though one of the parties, Bloco de Esquerda, offered an informative (issues-oriented) campaign to its online audience, the remaining parties mainly framed their social media campaign in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race. It is for this reason difficult to understand if, overall, the unmediated campaign offered by the Portuguese parties on the Internet differed considerably from the news coverage made by the traditional media. In this section we compare the two types of media (the press and the SNS) in order to identify which

one offered the most "informative" campaign to the audience (in terms of the salience of the different media frames and the nature/categories of substantive political issues).

As we can see in Figure 108, with respect to the overall salience of the different media frames in both the press and SNS, the Portuguese campaign, similar to the other three campaigns analyzed, followed the pattern predicted by our *Uninformative News* hypothesis. On the one hand, the strategy/horse-race and the conflict aspects were more salient in the newspapers' news coverage than in the Portuguese parties' online campaigns. On the other hand, the Issue Frame was, on average, more salient on the SNS than in the press. These differences, however, are not as substantial as in some of the other three elections.

In the Portuguese case, the three most salient media frames in both the press and the SNS were, in this order, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, the Issues Frame and the Conflict Frame. With respect to the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, the percentage of news articles that included those aspects was 61.7% while on social media this frame was shown in 56.6% of the posts. These results suggest that both the readers of newspapers and the parties' online audience received a considerable, and similar, number of articles and messages framed in terms of Strategy and Horse-Race aspects.

Regarding the Issues Frame, even though, as the *Uninformative News* hypothesis predicted, its salience was higher on the SNS, the difference between the two media types was relatively small. While 40.1% of the SNS posts dealt with substantive political issues, in the traditional news coverage of the campaign the proportion of news stories with the Issues Frame was 34.5%. Even though the difference is not substantial, when we look at the number of messages that in addition to discussing extensively political issues included the position of the political parties on those particular issues, the difference between the two media becomes slightly more relevant. In the press 28.9% of the articles offered the opinion of at least one of the parties regarding a certain issue, while on the SNS the parties' stance on certain issues was conveyed in 37.9% of the messages and videos. These results highlight an important aspect, not only limited to the Portuguese case, that differentiates the traditional and social medias' communication in the context of electoral campaigns. On the one hand, even though traditional media stories might deal with substantive political issues, it does not necessarily mean that those stories will include the position of the candidates and parties on those issues. In those cases the audience will only be aware of which topics and political issues were prominent during the campaign but not the political parties' position and opinions on those issues. In the SNS campaign, on the other hand, it is more frequent the link between a

discussed political issue and the candidate's or party's proposal/position on that issue since they communicate directly to the electorate.

The third most frequent media frame in the Portuguese election, for both the traditional and online media, was the Conflict. Similar to the other two main frames, the frequency of this aspect in the two types of media analyzed was relatively similar. The proportion of newspaper stories showing conflict between the different campaign actors was 29.7% while on SNS this frame was included in 25.3% of the online messages. Overall, considering that in the U.S. and Italian examples more than half of news articles included the Conflict Frame, the results show us that this aspect played a relatively small role in the 2015 Portuguese electoral campaign. Not only was the overall salience of Conflict in this election small but also the difference between the two media regarding the use of this frame.

In general, the media frames' analysis of the Portuguese campaign both on the SNS and in the press showed us that the content of the traditional media did not differ considerably from the main Portuguese parties' online campaign. Even though, as we saw, one of the parties had the most Issue-focused campaign from all parties and candidates analyzed in this dissertation, the average salience of Issues in the SNS campaigns was just slightly higher than in the Portuguese newspapers. There were, however, two media frames, the Scandal and the Media-Relations frames, to which journalists paid considerable more attention than the parties.

In the traditional media, 6.4% of the stories dealt extensively with political scandals while on the SNS only 0.6% of the posts or videos focused on this aspect. Even though the discussion of political scandals was not overall a salient aspect in the Portuguese election, the difference between the two types of media, with respect to the use of this media frame, was significant. In the traditional media, the majority of the news stories that dealt extensively with political scandals mostly related to the former Portuguese prime minister José Sócrates, which had been preemptively arrested in 2014 over suspicions of corruption and money-laundering. The situation of José Sócrates, albeit a prominent topic in the news coverage of the election made by the press, was completely absent from the campaign made by the main political parties on social media. On the SNS the Scandal Frame not only was less salient but it was also only present, as we previously saw, in the online posts of BE and, on a much smaller extent, PS. These posts mostly focused on illegal or questionable behavior of actors connected to the government, with different accusations related to illegal use of public resources, political patronage and manipulation of the government's financial reports.

Similar to the Scandal, the Media-Relations Frame also had considerable more visibility in the traditional news media coverage of the election than in the parties' social media accounts, even though the overall salience of this media frame was very low in both media. In the press, the Media-Relations aspect was extensively discussed in 3.2% of the newspaper articles. These news stories mostly focused on complaints of smaller political actors about receiving biased or unfair treatment from traditional media, particularly the television. In fact, a large part of the complaints made to the Portuguese agency regulating the election were related to the way journalists were reporting the campaign⁹⁰. On social media, this frame was only observed in the campaign of CDU.

The salience of the remaining two media frames analyzed, the Human-Interest and the Personalization, was similar in both media, particularly in the case of the second media frame. The Personalization Frame was observed in 1.6% of the newspaper articles and in 1.8% of the social media messages. Overall, the results reveal that stories and posts focused on the candidates' personal lives were not frequent in the Portuguese campaign. As for the Human-Interest, this frame was the fourth most salient aspect in both newspapers and SNS. In the press, this frame was present in 7.8% of the articles while on social media a total of 5.3% of the campaign posts or videos dealt extensively with the Human-Interest aspect. The presence of this Human-Interest perspective on social media, similar to the Media-Relations Frame, was mostly observed in the online campaign of one of the parties, CDU, particularly in its YouTube videos.

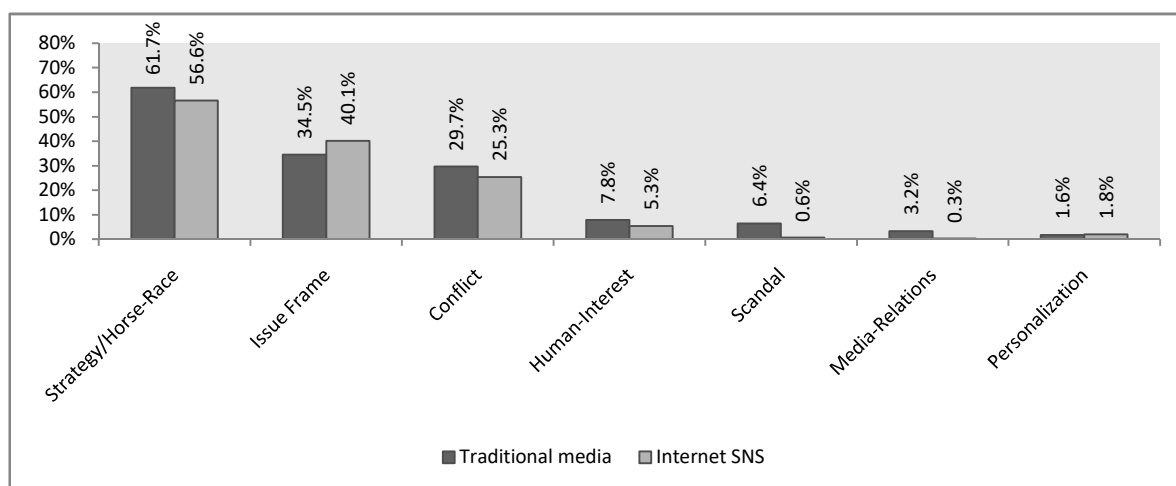


Figure 108 - Salience of frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2015 Portuguese elections.

⁹⁰ "CNE recebeu 42 queixas desde o início da campanha eleitoral", *O Público* (29/09/2015).

Regarding the salience of Issues and Conflict in the Portuguese campaign, when we only look at the newspaper stories that focused exclusively on only one of the four parties included in the SNS analysis, the results are interesting. As we can see in Table 6, the party that had the most Issue-oriented campaign on the SNS, BE, was also the party with the higher percentage of newspaper articles dealing with political issues. Almost half of the newspapers articles (47.5%) that dealt exclusively with the campaign of BE included the Issues Frame. However, the party with the least informative online campaign, in terms of the salience of the Issues Frame (24%), the coalition PaF, was not the party with the least issue-focused news coverage. Instead, the party that had the smallest proportion of news articles with the Issues Frame was CDU. If we look at the difference between the salience of the Issues Frame in the news media and SNS, PaF was the only party that had an online campaign less focused on Issues than its respective press coverage. In the case of PS the salience of Issues in its press articles and in the SNS messages was similar. Finally, the other two parties, CDU and BE, both had a considerably more informative social media campaign in comparison to their news coverage.

Contrary to the Issues Frame, the party with the most negative campaign on social media, PS, was not the party with the highest salience of conflict in the Portuguese press. In fact, interestingly, from the four parties analyzed, PS had the smallest proportion of news articles dealing with conflict. While on the SNS, the Conflict Frame was included in 33.4% of the PS campaign messages, in the news media this aspect was included in 30% of the articles. The party with the highest visibility of the Conflict Frame in the news coverage was CDU (41.7%). This means that CDU not only had the least issue-oriented news coverage but it also had the highest proportion of news articles with the Conflict Frame.

From the four Portuguese parties analyzed, only PS had higher salience of Conflict on the SNS compared to its news coverage. For the other three parties, the salience of the Conflict Frame was considerably higher in the newspaper articles. This difference was the larger in the case of PaF. While on the SNS, only 16.2% of the posts from this coalition included the Conflict Frame, in the traditional media 40.8% of the articles focused exclusively on PaF included some sort of conflict between political actors.

Overall these results show us two important things. The first one is that the news coverage that each party received in the press did not reflect, in general, the type of campaign that those parties pursued on social media. In most cases, the campaign of the parties on the SNS, in terms of the salience of substantive political issues and conflict, differed substantively from the news articles exclusively focused on those parties. For the majority of

examples, the online campaign was considerably more informative and less negative than the news coverage of the party's campaign. The second aspect is that, despite the differences mentioned above, the results also suggest that, with respect to the salience of substantive political issues in the news media, the type of campaign carried out by the political actors can be relevant. The exceptionally informative social media campaign of BE, in terms of the amount and diversity of the substantive political issues discussed, was also associated with a considerably higher salience of the Issues Frame in the newspaper articles focused on that party. In other words, the results suggest that journalists do take some cues from the parties' campaigns and that parties and candidates have the possibility to also contribute for more informative news coverage of elections.

Table 10 - Salience of Issues and Conflict in the SNS campaign and newspaper articles exclusively focused on one of the Portuguese parties⁹¹.

	Issues				Conflict			
	PaF	PS	BE	CDU	PaF	PS	BE	CDU
News Coverage	28.9%	33.3%	47.5%	24.4%	40.8%	30%	35%	41.7%
SNS Campaign	24%	34.1%	62.5%	39.7%	16.2%	33.4%	22.6%	29.1%
News – SNS	4.9	-0.8	-15	-15.3	24.6	-3.4	12.4	12.6

As we already saw, the differences between the traditional and online media, regarding the overall salience of the three major media aspects that are analyzed in this dissertation (the Strategy/Horse-Race, Political Issues and Conflict), were relatively small in the Portuguese case. Curiously, different to what we observed in the previous cases, when we only look at the first frame included in each one of the articles or online messages, these differences become even less important. This was mostly the case for both Conflict and Issues Frames. In addition, when only looking at the first frames used by journalists and parties in the campaign, all the three main media frames were slightly more salient on social media. In other words, not only do the differences between media become less prominent but also two of these media frames, the Strategy/Horse-Race and the Conflict, become now slightly more salient on SNS than on the traditional news media. From all the four elections analyzed in this dissertation, Portugal was the only example where these three media frames, as first prominent aspect of each message, were all more salient on the Internet.

⁹¹ Number/percentage of newspaper articles focused exclusively on one of the parties: PaF(76/15.2%); PS(60/12%); BE(40/8%); CDU(41/8.2%).

In the case of Conflict, as we can see in Figure 109, the proportion of news articles that included this frame as the first aspect dealt in the story (11.8%) was identical to the proportion of SNS campaign messages that dealt first with this frame (12.2%). These results further suggest the relatively small relevance that the conflict between different campaign actors had in the 2015 Portuguese election. Also the percentage of SNS posts that mainly dealt with substantive political issues was similar to the percentage of press articles that focused first on this campaign aspect (25.2% and 24.2%, respectively). Even though BE in Portugal had the most issue-focused SNS campaign of all the parties and candidates analyzed in this thesis, the SNS campaign was not more informative than the news coverage done by the Portuguese journalists. In other words, with the exception of BE, the main Portuguese parties did not conduct neither negative nor particularly informative online campaigns.

Similar to Conflict and Issues, also the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was more salient, as the first frame included in the messages, on the SNS in comparison to the traditional media. The Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was the first aspect presented in 52.7% of the Internet campaign messages while in the traditional media 47.1% of the stories dealt first with this Strategy and Horse-Race aspects of the campaign. Even though, as we saw in the previous figure, the overall proportion of messages that simply included this frame was higher in the press, on the SNS the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was more frequently used as the first and main aspect of the content. In the Portuguese case, more than half of the online posts and videos of the four main parties simply focused on aspects related to the way they were conducting their own campaigns, their position in the polls, the consequences of the election or simply asking supporters to vote for them.

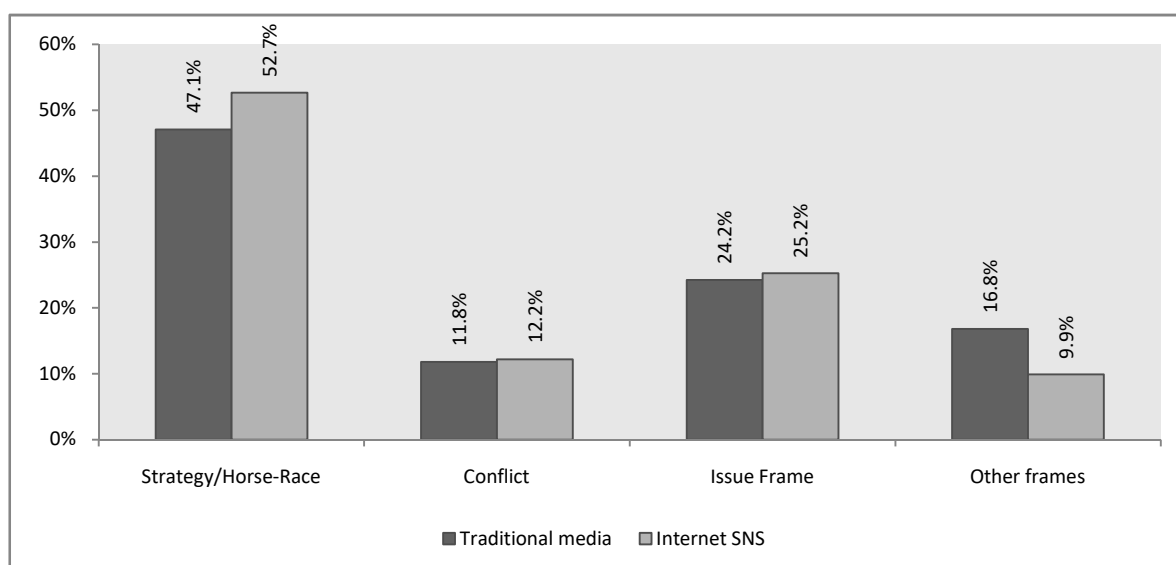


Figure 109 - First frames in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2015 Portuguese elections.

Regarding the visibility and nature of the issues discussed, the news media coverage of this election was similar to the campaign conducted by the main Portuguese parties on social media. As Figure 110 shows us, the three most salient categories of issues in the SNS campaign (Economy and Work, Welfare and Family, and Finances and Taxes) were also, even though in different order, the three most frequent types of issues in the newspaper articles. For both media, SNS and newspapers, Economy and Work was the most salient type of issues discussed in the Portuguese election. In total, 22.1% of the news articles that dealt extensively with substantive political issues, and 24.9% for the SNS posts, focused on aspects related to Economy and Work. The second most salient aspect in the press (third on the SNS) was the Welfare and Family. A total of 20.3% of the newspaper articles with the Issues Frame dealt mainly with problems related to Welfare and Family. On the SNS, the proportion of messages focused on this topic was slightly lower (14.9%). In the SNS campaign messages, the second most salient category of issues was Finances and Taxes. From all of the online posts that included the Issues Frame, 19.1% of them focused on aspects related to the countries' Finances and Taxes. Even though the salience of this category was lower in the press, corresponding to 10.9% of the articles that dealt with substantive political issues, the Finances and Taxes aspects were nevertheless the third most addressed issue's subject by the journalists.

From the remaining categories of political issues, five of them were more salient in the press than on the SNS. These categories were Health, Immigration, Institutional Design, Transport and National Security. On the other hand, there were also five types of issues - Education, Society/Culture, Environmental Protection, Law/Order and Foreign Policy - that were more salient on social media. These last two categories, Law/Order and Foreign Policy, were even absent from the Portuguese news coverage as the main issue topic of news articles. This difference suggests, to some extent, that the SNS campaign made by the Portuguese parties encompassed and discussed a broader scope of political issues, or at least issue categories, compared to the news media coverage of the same campaign.

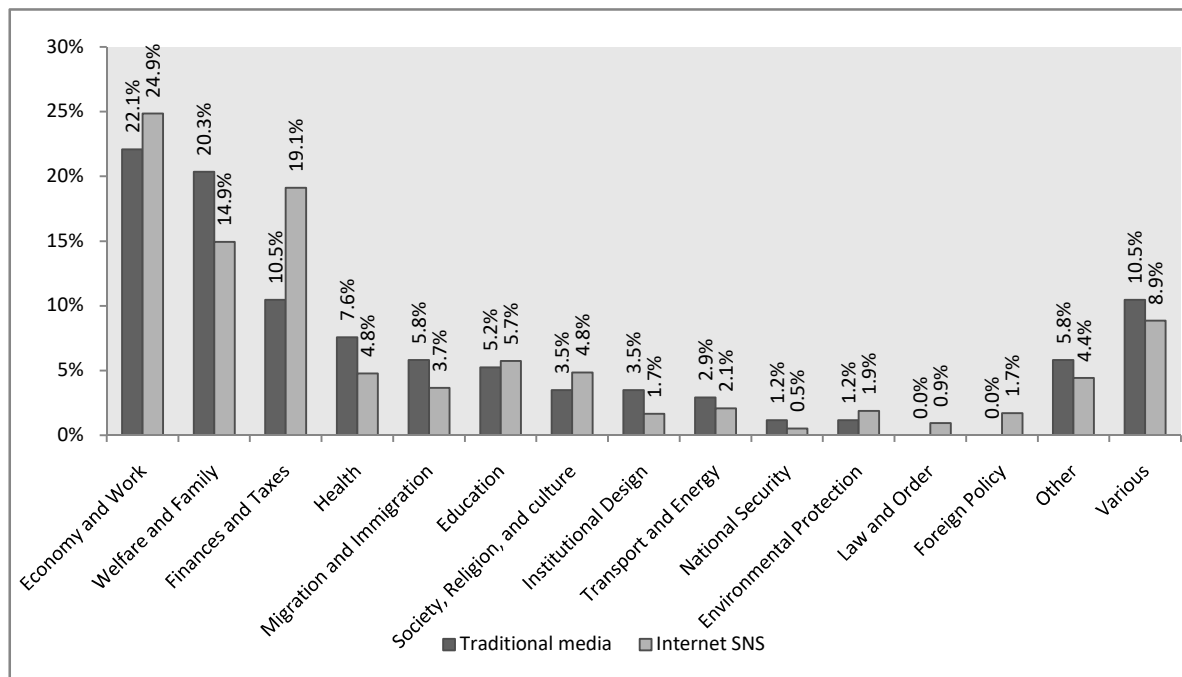


Figure 110 - Type of issues in the news media and in the SNS campaign of the 2015 Portuguese elections.

This chapter examined the salience of relevant political communication aspects on both the traditional media news coverage and the main parties' SNS campaign during the Portuguese legislative election of 2015. Similar to the previous three case studies, particular emphasis was put on the salience that the Strategy/Horse-Race, Issues and Conflict media frames had on both the press and the Internet. As predicted, concerning the traditional media, the Portuguese news coverage of the election was predominantly focused on Strategy and Horse-Race aspects. Once again, journalists were mainly focused on the way parties were conducting their campaigns, their positions in the polls and also the consequences of the election in terms of government and parliament composition. The relatively low salience that conflict between political actors had in the press was however less foreseen, considering the expectations drawn from the literature and the other elections analyzed for this dissertation. This result however does not seem to indicate a particularly lower interest of Portuguese journalists in reporting the candidates' skirmishes but rather points to the lesser role that conflict played in the campaign carried out the main parties in this election. The analyses of the SNS campaigns suggests that the Portuguese parties paid relatively little attention to their opponents and focused mostly on conveying messages related to their own campaigns.

Regarding the salience of media frames, the news coverage of the Portuguese election was identical to the overall campaign that the main parties offered online. The similarity becomes even more evident when the analysis focused on only the first media frames appearing in each journalistic article or online message. Overall, the Portuguese case did not

confirm our *uninformative news*' hypothesis. Rather, the results suggest that the low salience that substantive political issues had in the news coverage of the Portuguese election was mostly the result of the *hollow campaigns* conducted by the majority of Portuguese parties.

Even though the Portuguese case did not reveal any major differences between the two types of media analyzed, it nevertheless highlighted one important aspect concerning online campaigns. These results show that parties running in the same election can conduct extremely dissimilar campaigns on social media. Even though the majority of Portuguese parties analyzed had campaigns centering around Strategy/Horse-Race aspects, the SNS campaign of BE mainly focused on substantive political issues from a wide scope of policy areas.

Overall, the four elections analyzed in this dissertation revealed a similar pattern regarding the salience of the main media frames. As predicted with the *Uninformative News* hypothesis, in all of four elections the Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict aspects were more salient in the traditional media, while the Issues Frame was more often included in the SNS campaign of the parties. However, the results also reveal some differences between countries, between parties/candidates, and sometimes even between different types of social media. The next chapter draws a comparison between the four elections in order to understand if, controlling for those identified differences, the campaigns made by the parties and candidates on social media were indeed more informative than the news coverage of those campaigns. In addition to this, we are also interested in seeing if the U.S. is indeed an exceptional case as suggested by Patterson (2003), and if the type of election (presidential *versus* parliamentary) has any effect in the salience of the seven media frames identified in this dissertation.

Chapter Eight – Uninformative News vs. Hollow campaigns: The comparative analysis of four elections

In this chapter, all the media data collected from the four different elections, in four different countries (the U.S., Italy, Brazil and Portugal), is analyzed and compared in order to understand if certain campaign topics are actually more often raised by journalists, when covering political elections, than by the candidates and parties, when framing their own campaigns on social media. In order to do this we use logistic regression analysis to identify regularities in the data and see if, when also controlling for differences between countries and candidates or parties, the odds of a certain frame being present on each one of the three SNS were significantly higher than in the newspaper articles. Since it only uses data from four countries and elections and 13 parties or candidates, the objective of this chapter is not to build a strong model to predict the presence or absence of a particular media frame in the news coverage and social media campaigns. Nevertheless, whenever it is found relevant, the differences between types of election (e.g. presidential and parliamentary) and the campaign actors (e.g. incumbent and challengers; bigger and smaller parties) will also be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of the regressions. Even though the main goal of this chapter is to test the two main competing hypotheses of this research (*Uninformative Media* and *Hollow Campaigns*), the suggested American exceptionalism of the news coverage of elections (Patterson, 1993) will also be taken into consideration. The objective is to see if the journalists' media logic of reporting political events is indeed exceptional in the U.S..

With respect to the content and structure of this chapter, the salience of all seven media frames (i.e. Strategy/Horse-Race, Issues, Conflict, Scandal, Media Relations, Personalization and Human Interest) is analyzed and the results shown in separate tables. In addition, it also examines the use of the three main frames (Strategy/Horse-Race, Issues and Conflict) as the first and, therefore, the main aspects emphasized in both newspaper articles and SNS posts/videos. The presence or absence of each one of those media frames are the dependent variables in each one of the logistic regressions.

All the tables presented in this chapter include three models examining the salience of each media frame. The first model includes, as independent variables, dummy variables for each type of media analyzed, the press being the reference category. Probability weights are used in this model to compensate, within the entire dataset, for differences in the quantity of SNS messages from each party or candidate and the different number of news articles from each newspaper. This means that, for example, one Twitter post made by Obama in the U.S.

will have the same weight as a Twitter post made by Dilma in Brazil. By undertaking this sample weighting we potentially avoid the results being slightly biased because, for example, a small group of candidates/parties posted a considerably higher amount of Twitter messages. The second model adds dummy variables for each country, with the U.S. being the reference category. The U.S. was chosen as the reference category in order to more intuitively investigate the already mentioned exceptionalism of the country. In this model we use probability weights within the countries for each type of media. This means that a Facebook post of Dilma in Brazil has the same weight as the Facebook posts made by one of the other two Brazilian candidates⁹².

The third model includes, in place of the country variables, dummy variables for each candidate/party, and uses the campaign of Obama as a reference category. The selection of Obama's as the reference category is not, however, particularly meaningful for the analysis made in this chapter. Nevertheless, Obama's campaigns have been acclaimed for its incorporation and innovative use of social media, making it also, for this reason, an interesting comparative point for the campaigns of other candidates and parties. This third and last model includes, from the press, only the articles exclusively focused on one of the candidates/parties included in the social media analysis. As a consequence, the number of observations drops from 16.267 to 14.682. Those observations lost were newspaper articles either dealing with more than one party/candidate, with a party/candidate not included in the social media analysis, or simply not dealing with any particular party/candidate.

All of the tables discussed in this chapter report, for each model, two alternative but equivalent ways to discuss effects from the logistic regression (the log odds/logit coefficients and odds ratios), with the corresponding robust standard errors (shown between brackets). A positive coefficient, or an odds ratio above one, suggests that the expected odds of a specific frame being present in that particular category (for example Twitter) is greater than the expected odds of that frame being present in the reference category (the press). An odds ratio of 2, for example, indicates that the expected odds of a frame being present in a particular category are two times higher than the expected odds of that frame being present in the reference category. On the other hand, a negative coefficient or an odds ratio below zero indicates that the expected odds of a media frame being present in one category are lower than the reference category.

⁹² Nevertheless, the results remain essentially the same if the cases are not weighted in both models.

8.1 - Strategy/Horse-Race.

The first media frame analyzed in this chapter is the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. As we saw in the four case studies, this frame was consistently the most salient topic in the press coverage. The results of the logistic regressions, presented in Table 11, confirm that the probability of this aspect being discussed in the press was indeed higher than on the SNS. This difference was more evident in the case of Twitter and YouTube.

As we can see in the first model, the odds ratios for both Twitter and YouTube were 0.489. This means that the expected odds of those two online platforms including the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame are more than two times lower ($1/0.489$) than the expected odds of this aspect being present in the press. In the case of Facebook, the expected odds of the Strategy/Horse-Race being present in this SNS are 34% less than for the press. Even though statistically significant, the difference between Facebook and the press is not as substantial as on the other SNS. Overall, these results reinforce what we had observed in the four case studies, that journalists, compared to candidates and parties, frame more frequently the campaigns in terms of Strategy and Horse-Race aspects. In addition, the results also highlight, regarding the presence of Strategy/Horse-Race aspects, some differences between the three SNS, with Facebook content being most similar to the content offered by the press.

The differences between the media categories remain the same when we include the country variables (model 2). Regarding the differences between countries, in Brazil the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was similar to the salience that it had in the U.S.. This Frame was, overall, more salient in the Portuguese campaign. In this country, the expected odds of this frame being present in the election (that includes not only the news coverage but also the parties campaign on social media) was 37% greater than in the U.S.. Italy, on the other hand, was the country where the campaign was less focused on Strategy and Horse-Race aspects. The odds of the Italian campaign including this frame were about 25% less than for the U.S.. Rather than a possible lack of interest of Italian journalists and parties to deal extensively with the Strategy/Horse-Race aspect of the campaign, it is possible that the fact that the Italian electoral law forbids the media to publish opinion polls during the 15 days before election day might have contributed to this result. Nevertheless, as we saw, some Italian parties still discussed polls' results on social media during that period.

Table 11 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Strategy/Horse-Race						
Twitter	-0.716*** (0.0530)	0.489*** (0.0259)	-0.715*** (0.0538)	0.489*** (0.0263)	-1.100*** (0.0880)	0.333*** (0.0293)
Facebook	-0.291*** (0.0641)	0.747*** (0.0479)	-0.290*** (0.0642)	0.748*** (0.0480)	-0.638*** (0.0948)	0.529*** (0.0501)
YouTube	-0.715*** (0.0980)	0.489*** (0.0479)	-0.710*** (0.0891)	0.492*** (0.0438)	-0.837*** (0.102)	0.433*** (0.0443)
Italy			-0.216*** (0.0722)	0.806*** (0.0582)		
Brazil			0.108 (0.0786)	1.114 (0.0876)		
Portugal			0.317*** (0.0725)	1.373*** (0.0995)		
Romney					0.300** (0.126)	1.349** (0.170)
PD					0.299*** (0.0874)	1.349*** (0.118)
PdL					-0.619*** (0.0705)	0.538*** (0.0379)
Scelta					-0.318*** (0.0772)	0.728*** (0.0562)
M5S					0.640*** (0.0860)	1.896*** (0.163)
Dilma					0.141 (0.120)	1.152 (0.138)
Aecio					0.358*** (0.0879)	1.431*** (0.126)
Marina					0.308*** (0.0804)	1.360*** (0.109)
PaF					1.083*** (0.0812)	2.953*** (0.240)
PS					0.673*** (0.0911)	1.960*** (0.179)
BE					-0.302*** (0.0848)	0.740*** (0.0627)
CDU					0.668*** (0.0802)	1.950*** (0.156)
Constant	0.599*** (0.0447)	1.821*** (0.0814)	0.556*** (0.0689)	1.744*** (0.120)	0.655*** (0.101)	1.925*** (0.194)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

These results do not suggest, at first glance, an American exceptionalism in terms of the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. However, these coefficients take into account not only the newspaper articles but also the SNS campaign. In fact, when we only look at the press, the salience of Strategy and Horse-Race aspects was indeed exceptionally higher in the U.S. (about 15 percent points higher than the country with the second highest figure). In a way, Patterson's suggestion of an exceptionalism of the American press was to some extent confirmed regarding the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. What we did not find, however, was any clear relationship between the salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame and the type of election. Italy and Portugal, both with parliamentary elections, had

respectively the campaigns with the lowest and highest salience of that frame.

When we include party/candidates dummy variables in the regression (model 3), the differences between the SNS and the press become even larger, particularly on Twitter. The expected odds of a Twitter post include the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame are three times smaller than odds of that frame being included in an article from the press. These differences in the media categories, however, are not strictly related to the differences between parties but rather to the observations dropped in the model. In the data analyzed, while the percentage of press articles, associated with one of the analyzed parties/candidates, that include the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame is 70.08%, in the news articles not dealing exclusively with any of the analyzed parties/candidates, and therefore dropped in this model, the percentage is only 59.83%. This seemingly odd result, suggesting a higher number of "horse-races" with a single "horse", can be explained by the fact that this frame includes both stories dealing extensively with horse-race aspects of the campaign but also stories dealing with the strategies of the candidates/parties and the way they conduct their campaigns. If we only look at articles dealing strictly with the horse-race part of this frame, this aspect was naturally more frequent in the articles dealing with more than one candidate or party.

Regarding the differences between the campaigns of the 13 parties and candidates analyzed, the results reveal that the majority of them had campaigns more focused on Strategy/Horse-Race aspects than Obama. There were only three cases (PdL, Scelta and BE) where the salience of this frame was lower than in campaign of this U.S. candidate. Surprisingly, despite frequent messages of Berlusconi about the rank of his party and his opponents in the opinion polls, it was PdL whose campaign overall had the lowest salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame (with the expected odds of including this media frame being almost two times lower than Obama's campaign). From the 13 parties/candidates analyzed, it was the Portuguese incumbent coalition, PaF, which had the campaign most focused on strategy and horse-race aspects. The news articles and SNS content of PaF were almost three times as likely as Obama's to include the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame.

The results do not suggest that any particular characteristics of the parties and candidates analyzed might explain the salience of this frame in the electoral campaigns. The only clear pattern suggested in the results is that journalists more frequently frame the electoral campaigns in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race than the parties and candidates on social media. While, in the entire dataset, a total of 63% of the newspaper articles included the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, in the three SNS combined the same aspect was only present in 46% of the items. Overall, the results in all three models consistently show that social media

campaigns are less likely to be framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race compared to the traditional media, confirming the *H1b* hypothesis.

8.2 - Issues Frame.

The second media frame analyzed is the Issues Frame. As we can see in the first model in Table 12, this frame was more frequently used on social media, compared to the press. On all of the three SNS, the odds of the campaign messages dealing with substantive political issues were greater, with the differences being statistically significant, than the odds of the press including the Issues Frame. Interestingly, this difference was more evident in the case of YouTube. On this platform, the odds of a video including the Issues Frame were more than 2.3 times greater than in an article from the press. In the case of Twitter and Facebook the odds of the campaign messages including substantive political issues were around 32% and 34% larger than for newspaper articles. The results suggest that journalists, compared to the parties and candidates in their SNS messages, less frequently frame electoral campaigns in terms of political issues. However, the differences in the overall visibility of this frame in both types of media is relatively small. In the entire sample of articles and online content analyzed and combining the three SNS, the Issues Frame was included in 39.4% of the social media content, while in the press this frame was present in 30.7% of the articles. Nevertheless, on YouTube, more than 47% of the videos analyzed dealt extensively with substantive political issues. These results give some support to the *H1a* hypothesis.

When we control for the differences among countries, social media messages remain more likely to include the Issues Frame than the press (Model 2). While in the case of Facebook the odds slightly decrease, which has now become only 25% higher than the press, on the other two online platforms the odds ratios slightly increase. The odds of Twitter messages including the Issues Frame are 34% larger than in the newspaper articles, while for YouTube the expected odds of dealing with substantive political issues are almost 2.5 times greater than the press. These results suggest that parties and candidates do rely on their online videos to discuss and convey to the electorate their positions on political issues, making YouTube a useful platform to acquire also more substantive campaign information.

Regarding the differences between countries in the salience of the Issues Frame, the results reflect, to a certain extent, an exceptionalism of the American case, although not the anticipated one. Actually, among the four countries analyzed, it was in the U.S. that this frame was more salient. The other country with presidential elections, Brazil, offered the campaign

with the lowest salience of issues. The odds of SNS messages or news articles in Brazil including the Issues Frame were 85% lower than for the U.S.. Once again, the results do not suggest that a particular type of the elections analyzed, presidential or parliamentary, is more likely to produce more informative campaigns, in terms of the salience of substantive political information.

Table 12 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Issues Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Issues						
Twitter	0.278*** (0.0553)	1.320*** (0.0730)	0.336*** (0.0556)	1.399*** (0.0778)	-0.0546 (0.0825)	0.947 (0.0781)
Facebook	0.299*** (0.0668)	1.349*** (0.0901)	0.247*** (0.0674)	1.280*** (0.0862)	-0.118 (0.0905)	0.888 (0.0804)
YouTube	0.840*** (0.0991)	2.316*** (0.230)	0.896*** (0.0910)	2.450*** (0.223)	0.363*** (0.0974)	1.437*** (0.140)
Italy			-0.196*** (0.0729)	0.822*** (0.0599)		
Brazil			-0.614*** (0.0805)	0.541*** (0.0436)		
Portugal			-0.474*** (0.0736)	0.622*** (0.0458)		
Romney					-0.0696 (0.125)	0.933 (0.117)
PD					-0.200** (0.0879)	0.818** (0.0719)
PdL					0.141** (0.0685)	1.151** (0.0788)
Scelta					0.231*** (0.0760)	1.260*** (0.0958)
M5S					-0.758*** (0.0908)	0.469*** (0.0426)
Dilma					-0.114 (0.118)	0.893 (0.105)
Aecio					-0.575*** (0.0917)	0.562*** (0.0516)
Marina					-0.527*** (0.0835)	0.591*** (0.0493)
PaF					-1.090*** (0.0858)	0.336*** (0.0289)
PS					-0.231** (0.0917)	0.793** (0.0728)
BE					0.419*** (0.0829)	1.520*** (0.126)
CDU					-0.839*** (0.0863)	0.432*** (0.0373)
Constant	-0.818*** (0.0470)	0.441*** (0.0208)	-0.523*** (0.0705)	0.593*** (0.0418)	-0.182* (0.0969)	0.834* (0.0808)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

However, one factor that might have contributed to these results was, as suggested by Kahn and Kenney (1999), the uncertainty of the electoral outcomes. As discussed, the outcome of the U.S. election became uncertain after the first electoral debate, "won" by Romney, which tightened the difference between the two candidates in the opinion polls. In

the Italian case, the electoral outcome was also unclear during the parties' campaign. The fact that the difference between the two most voted alliances in the election was smaller than 0.5% is major evidence of this. In addition, the fact that it was forbidden to publish opinion polls in the last two weeks before election day might have contributed to increase the uncertainty about the outcome of the race.

In the remaining two countries, where the Issues Frame was overall less salient, there was in a way less uncertainty in the electoral outcomes. In the case of Brazil, it was clear from the start that the incumbent candidate would move to at least the second round of voting. Only the death of Eduardo Campos brought some uncertainty to the election regarding who would be the second most voted candidate. In the Portuguese case not only was the difference between the two most voted parties higher than 6% but also the majority of the opinion polls in the four weeks gave a clear lead to the incumbent coalition. In sum, the differences observed between countries regarding the salience of political issues might to some extent reflect different levels of uncertainty about the electoral outcome of those campaigns.

Finally, when we control for variation among parties and candidates, the differences between social media and the press become less evident. In fact, the presence of the Issues Frame on two of the SNS (Twitter and Facebook) becomes less frequent in comparison to newspaper articles, even though those differences are not statistically significant. In the case of the Facebook, where the salience of the Issues Frame becomes the lowest among the three SNS, the odds of Facebook posts including the Issues Frame are 12.6 percent less than for newspaper articles. In this third model, YouTube is the only SNS where the Issues Frame is more salient than in the press. The odds of dealing extensively with substantive political issues for the YouTube videos were about 44 percent larger than for the press.

It is, however, important to note that those changes observed for the salience of the Issues Frame in the different types of media result to some extent from the press articles that, because they did not focus on one particular party, were dropped in the third model. While overall the Issues Frame was present in 38.95% of the articles that dealt exclusively with one of the parties or candidates analyzed, in the remaining newspaper articles, which were not included in the third model, the Issues Frame was only present in 27.3% of them. It is, however, expected that the Issues Frame becomes more salient when we only analyze articles exclusively focused on one of the candidates/parties, simply because this subset of the press data excludes the majority of the articles dealing, for example, with the pure Horse-Race aspects of the campaign, where opinion polls are presented and the different electoral contenders compared in the same news-story. In other words, the differences observed among

traditional and online types of media do not result exclusively from the inclusion of the parties' and candidates' dummy variables in the model, which would suggest that the news coverage indeed reflected, to a great extent, the campaigns of the main political actors present in the election.

Nevertheless, these results highlight an important aspect regarding the differences between SNS campaigns and the traditional news coverage. The results show us that newspaper articles that are single-candidate/party focused do not differ considerably from Facebook and Twitter posts, in terms of their likelihood of dealing with substantive political issues. However, not only are these single-party/candidate articles not as frequent as the more encompassing ones, but it is also unlikely that readers will be so selective when reading the newspapers' campaign section and avoid news pieces dealing, in the same text, with more than one party. In the end and overall, the salience of the Issues Frame is higher on the SNS, in comparison to the press, even though the difference is not as substantial as it is, for example, with the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame.

Regarding differences between the parties and candidates analyzed, there were only three cases where the Issues Frame was more salient than in Obama's campaign. These three cases were the campaigns of PdL and Scelta Civica, in Italy, and the campaign of BE in Portugal. From the three, it was BE whose campaign focused most on political issues. The expected odds of the campaign messages of BE discussing substantive political issues were 52% larger than in Obama's case. Curiously, the least "informative" campaign analyzed also came from another Portuguese party, the incumbent coalition PaF. The odds of newspaper articles and online messages from PaF dealing extensively with substantive political issues were almost three times lower than in Obama's campaign, and 4.5 times lower than the expected odds for the campaign of BE. These results further reinforce the idea that parties and candidates competing in the same election can produce completely dissimilar campaigns. In other words, having a party almost exclusively campaigning on different political Issues doesn't necessarily mean, as it was the case in Portugal, that the overall campaign will be very informative and oriented towards the discussion of political issues. In fact, as the Italian example suggested, when there are multiple actors in the campaign, only more controversial proposals put forward by one of the main forces in the election seem to have the potential to spark the issues' discussion and interaction between the different parties. Otherwise, as it was the case in Portugal, despite the efforts of BE to extensively frame its campaign in terms of political issues, the remaining parties kept campaigning with a silo mentality and the Issues Frame never became a prominent aspect in the election.

It is interesting to see that the two political competitors that had the least informative campaigns, from all of the parties and candidates analyzed, were PaF and CDU. What these two political actors have in common is that they were coalitions of two parties. This fact might have contributed, particularly in the case of PaF (where the two parties that composed it were relatively big and the alliance was relatively recent), for the low salience of substantive political issues in their campaign since it becomes considerably more difficult to coordinate the policy preferences and opinions of the different actors involved. Another interesting aspect suggested by these results is that candidates' and parties' ideology (e.g. left-right; liberal-conservative) does not seem an important factor for the salience of substantive political issues in the campaigns. There were examples of informative and uninformative campaigns on both sides of the political spectrum.

Finally, even though the number of parties/candidates analyzed is relatively small to give us strong results, we did not find evidence that incumbent parties conducted less informative campaigns than their opponents. In fact, with the exception of Portugal, the results seem to suggest the opposite. Even though the differences were neither substantial nor statistical significant, in the cases of the U.S, Italy and Brazil the salience of political issues was higher in the online campaigns of the incumbents. Therefore, the *H4* hypothesis was not confirmed by these results.

8.3 - Conflict Frame.

The third media frame analyzed is the Conflict Frame. As we saw in each one of the four case studies, the conflict between the political actors was consistently more salient in the press compared to the SNS. The results presented in Table 13 confirm that difference. As we can see in the first model, the salience of the Conflict Frame was consistently and significantly lower in social media, confirming the *H1c* hypothesis. It was on Twitter that conflict was less times observed. Compared to the press, the odds of Twitter including the Conflict Frame in the messages were almost 2.5 times lower. On the other two SNS the differences were equally substantial, particularly in the case of Facebook. The articles from the press were 2.2 times as likely as the Facebook messages to include conflict between the campaign actors. On YouTube the expected odds of this SNS including the Conflict Frame were 95% smaller than the press.

Similar to what was found for the Strategy/Horse-Race and Issues Frames, these results further support the "*Uninformative News*" hypothesis that anticipated the Conflict

Frame to be more salient in the traditional media, compared to the campaign of the parties and candidates on social media. In other words, either the result of a media/commercial logic, editorial norms or simply a different perception of what it is relevant in an electoral campaign, journalists, compared to political parties and candidates, are more likely to frame those campaigns in terms of conflict. It is, however, possible that the attacks shown in the articles and campaign material were aimed at the opponents' policy proposals and preferences. Even though this does not make the use of the Conflict Frame more justifiable, it would nevertheless make the article, to some extent, more informative. However, when we compare the type of attacks presented on the different media, the results show that the three SNS were also more likely, compared to the press, to have attacks directed at the opponents' political issues. In fact, all of the three SNS were over two times more likely than the press to have attacks aimed at the opponents' political issues, rather than other aspects such as the personal traits and values of the opponents. In other words, not only was the conflict more salient in the press, but also that conflict, compared to the SNS, was more frequently related to candidates' personal traits and values (i.e. less informative).

When we control for the different elections/countries, in model 2, the salience of the Conflict Frame remains substantially higher in the press compared to the SNS. The results suggest a certain exceptionalism of the U.S. case regarding the presence of the Conflict Frame. The conflict between political actors was considerably more frequent in the U.S. campaign compared to the other three elections analyzed. On the other hand, it was in the Brazilian campaign that the Conflict Frame was the least salient. The expected odds of a campaign message and news article in Brazil including the Conflict Frame were 2.2 times lower than in the U.S.. Regarding the other two countries, compared to the U.S., the odds of campaign messages showing conflict were 34% lower in Italy and almost 90% lower in Portugal.

Regarding Brazil, the result is somehow surprising given that the Brazilian journalists often characterized the campaign made by the main candidates as exceedingly negative. The Brazilian election seems to be a good example of how the traditional media can, to a certain extent, distort a campaign by suggesting that the attacks between candidates had been more prominent in the campaign than they in fact were (or at least in the candidates' online campaigns). As the Brazilian election chapter showed, there was a considerable difference between the press and the SNS regarding the salience of conflict. While in the newspapers 44.4% of the articles included the Conflict Frame, only 19.9% of the SNS content dealt with this aspect.

To some extent, the low salience of conflict in the SNS campaign of the Brazilian candidates can be seen as an unintended consequence of the two-round system used in this country to elect the president. In Brazil, contrary to the U.S., presidents are elected with an absolute majority of the popular vote. In the Brazilian 2014 presidential campaign there were, as we saw, three candidates with strong chances of making it to an almost certain runoff election. Since the endorsement of the third most voted candidate would become a crucial factor to decide the outcome of the runoff election, the Brazilian candidates, during the campaign for the first round of voting, might have restrained themselves from attacking more frequently their opponents to avoid antagonizing them and alienating their electorate. The fact that Dilma removed from YouTube, after the first-round election, all videos attacking Marina is strong evidence that Brazilian candidates had those strategic concerns in mind during the campaign.

Finally, when we include the party/candidate variables in model 3, the salience of the Conflict Frame remains substantially higher in the newspaper articles. The difference is particularly salient between the press and Twitter. Compared to Twitter, the odds of a newspaper article showing conflict between the campaign actors was 4.3 times greater. In the case of Facebook and YouTube the coefficients are relatively close to each other and the expected odds of both platforms including the Conflict Frame are roughly 3.2 times smaller than for the press. Again, these results mainly reflect a difference between newspaper articles dealing exclusively with one of the 13 parties/candidates, and therefore included and analyzed in the third model, and the remaining articles that did not deal exclusively with one of those parties. While the Conflict Frame was present in 54.9% of the articles dealing with one of the 13 parties/candidates, only 40.2% of the other newspaper articles included this frame. This difference suggests that journalists often only refer to one side of the problem or issue when reporting conflict and attacks between political actors.

With respect to differences between the parties and candidates, the results show that only three of the campaigns analyzed were significantly more negative (i.e. more frequently framed in terms of conflict) than Obama's. These campaigns were the ones of Romney in the U.S., PdL in Italy and PS in Portugal. For those three actors, the expected odds of their campaign messages including the Conflict Frame were approximately 40% larger than the odds of that frame being present in Obama's news articles and SNS items. Another three campaigns (PD, M5S, and BE) were relatively similar to Obama's with respect to the salience of the Conflict Frame, with the differences between them not being statistically significant. Finally, the remaining six parties and candidates examined (Scelta Civica, Dilma, Aécio,

Marina, PaF and CDU) ran campaigns significantly less negative than Obama. From the entire group of parties and candidates analyzed, it was the Portuguese incumbent coalition, PaF, that ran the least negative campaign. The odds of a campaign message or news article about PaF including the Conflict Frame were almost 2.7 times lower than the expected odds of this aspect being present in the campaign of the U.S. candidate.

Table 13 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Conflict Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Conflict						
Twitter	-0.888*** (0.0545)	0.412*** (0.0224)	-0.916*** (0.0546)	0.400*** (0.0218)	-1.460*** (0.0850)	0.232*** (0.0197)
Facebook	-0.785*** (0.0667)	0.456*** (0.0304)	-0.826*** (0.0669)	0.438*** (0.0293)	-1.147*** (0.0917)	0.317*** (0.0291)
YouTube	-0.665*** (0.0967)	0.514*** (0.0497)	-0.615*** (0.0924)	0.541*** (0.0500)	-1.165*** (0.103)	0.312*** (0.0320)
Italy			-0.294*** (0.0770)	0.745*** (0.0574)		
Brazil			-0.790*** (0.0831)	0.454*** (0.0377)		
Portugal			-0.638*** (0.0798)	0.528*** (0.0422)		
Romney					0.370*** (0.135)	1.448*** (0.195)
PD					0.0118 (0.0952)	1.012 (0.0964)
PdL					0.398*** (0.0740)	1.489*** (0.110)
Scelta					-0.738*** (0.0929)	0.478*** (0.0444)
M5S					-0.0155 (0.0932)	0.985 (0.0918)
Dilma					-0.550*** (0.126)	0.577*** (0.0725)
Aecio					-0.222** (0.0983)	0.801** (0.0787)
Marina					-0.615*** (0.0964)	0.540*** (0.0521)
PaF					-0.990*** (0.0988)	0.372*** (0.0367)
PS					0.353*** (0.0989)	1.423*** (0.141)
BE					-0.00338 (0.0930)	0.997 (0.0927)
CDU					-0.637*** (0.0978)	0.529*** (0.0517)
Constant	-0.195*** (0.0433)	0.823*** (0.0356)	0.274*** (0.0722)	1.315*** (0.0950)	0.460*** (0.102)	1.584*** (0.161)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

One interesting pattern observed in these results is that in the majority of the elections

analyzed (the U.S., Italy and Portugal) the Conflict Frame was significantly less salient in the newspaper articles and online messages of the incumbent candidates/parties in comparison to the challengers' campaigns. The only exception was Brazil, where Marina's campaign was less negative than Dilma's. Still, the difference between these two campaigns, regarding the salience of conflict, was small and not statistically significant, being the difference between the two expected odds lower than 7%. Overall, in the four elections analyzed, the odds of incumbent parties or candidates having their campaigns framed in terms of conflict were almost 2.4 times lower than the odds of the challenging parties. These results are interesting but not surprising considering that incumbents have a fresh office record that can be as easily acclaimed, by them, as attacked, by their opponents. Similarly, other authors had already found that the opposition candidates tend to be, in general, more negative than the governing ones (e.g. Kahn & Kenney, 1999; Benoit, 2000; Hansen and Pedersen, 2008). Nevertheless it is interesting to see this hypothesis confirmed in four different first-order elections, in countries with different political contexts and electoral systems, with data from both the press and social media.

8.4 - Scandal Frame.

The fourth media frame analyzed is the Scandal Frame. Even though this media frame is not, in general, as salient as the Conflict and Strategy/Horse-Race Frames in the news coverage of electoral campaigns, its effect on the citizens' political attitudes, by undermining the image of the political actors and institutions, can be equally negative. Similarly to the Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames, and as predicted with the *Uninformative News* hypothesis (*H3a*), the Scandal Frame was more salient in the newspaper articles about the four electoral campaigns than in the parties' and candidates' social media messages. However, in the case of the salience of the Scandal Frame, the difference between these two types of media, the press and the SNS, was considerably more substantial. As we can see in the first model of Table 14, from all of the three online platforms analyzed, it was Twitter that had the lowest salience of the Scandal Frame. The odds of Twitter messages dealing with political scandals were almost 10 times smaller than the expected odds of newspaper articles dealing with the same aspect. This difference is well reflected in the percentages of newspaper articles and Twitter posts that dealt with political scandals. While, in total, 16.36% of the Newspaper articles analyzed included the Scandal Frame, this aspect was present in only 1.99% of the Twitter messages.

Table 14 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Scandal Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Scandal						
Twitter	-2.289*** (0.0990)	0.101*** (0.0100)	-2.123*** (0.0999)	0.120*** (0.0120)	-2.028*** (0.141)	0.132*** (0.0185)
Facebook	-1.845*** (0.135)	0.158*** (0.0214)	-1.717*** (0.133)	0.180*** (0.0239)	-1.496*** (0.164)	0.224*** (0.0368)
YouTube	-1.932*** (0.199)	0.145*** (0.0288)	-1.806*** (0.183)	0.164*** (0.0300)	-1.368*** (0.194)	0.255*** (0.0495)
Italy			1.495*** (0.171)	4.458*** (0.762)		
Brazil			1.777*** (0.170)	5.913*** (1.008)		
Portugal			-0.151 (0.223)	0.860 (0.192)		
Romney					-0.0453 (0.580)	0.956 (0.554)
PD					1.435*** (0.353)	4.201*** (1.483)
PdL					1.823*** (0.322)	6.193*** (1.996)
Scelta					0.700* (0.371)	2.015* (0.748)
M5S					2.008*** (0.339)	7.451*** (2.527)
Dilma					1.043*** (0.386)	2.838*** (1.096)
Accio					2.178*** (0.332)	8.828*** (2.929)
Marina					1.658*** (0.338)	5.251*** (1.775)
PaF					-1.493** (0.649)	0.225** (0.146)
PS					0.0304 (0.470)	1.031 (0.484)
BE					1.099*** (0.365)	3.000*** (1.096)
CDU					-2.246** (1.044)	0.106** (0.110)
Constant	-1.646*** (0.0566)	0.193*** (0.0109)	-2.856*** (0.166)	0.0575*** (0.00953)	-3.108*** (0.325)	0.0447*** (0.0145)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

The difference between the press and the other two SNS, Facebook and YouTube, was equally substantial with respect to the salience of the Scandal Frame. In the entire sample of campaign material analyzed, the percentages of Facebook posts and YouTube videos that dealt extensively with political scandals were very similar, 3.79% and 3.25% respectively. With respect to the expected odds of YouTube and the press, the newspaper articles were 6.9 times as likely as YouTube videos to include the Scandal Frame. In the case of Facebook, the

expected odds of newspaper articles dealing with political scandals were 6.3 times greater than the expected odds for this SNS. Overall, independently of the type of online platform, the difference in the salience of political scandals between the press and the SNS was huge.

When we include the country variables, in the second model, the differences between the two types of media slightly decrease, remaining nevertheless significant and substantial. With respect to the differences between countries, as it was expected from the content analysis discussed in the four case studies, the results show that political scandals were significantly more frequent in two of the campaigns analyzed (Italy and Brazil). It was in Brazil that the Scandal Frame was more salient. The odds of Brazilian campaign content including the Scandal Frame were almost 6 times greater than in the U.S..

The salience of the Scandal Frame in the Brazilian campaign is not surprising considering that it happened amid the revelation of one of the largest corruption/political scandals in modern history⁹³. This scandal erupted following investigations into a massive money laundering and bribery scheme (Operação Lava Jato) that involved directors of the state's oil company (Petrobras) and politicians from the biggest Brazilian parties. What was more surprising, however, was the huge disparity, between the traditional media and the SNS campaign, in the salience given to the Scandal Frame. While, overall, 27.9% of the Brazilian newspaper articles dealt extensively with scandals related to the campaign, only 4.3% of the campaign messages conveyed by the Brazilian candidates on the SNS addressed this aspect. These results further reinforce the idea that political candidates and journalists have different perceptions of which campaign aspects are relevant and should be more frequently conveyed to the citizens. However, the fact that this major scandal involved different political parties might have prevented the three main candidates, for strategic reasons, from discussing it more often, since it could eventually also backfire on themselves. Even though this corruption scandal initially mostly affected the incumbent candidate, there were several other political scandals brought up during the campaign that could be addressed by the candidates. Nevertheless, regardless of the reasons, it is evident that newspaper readers in Brazil received a very distorted picture of the campaign conducted by the three main Brazilian candidates with respect to the salience of the Scandal Frame.

After Brazil, it was the Italian campaign that was more frequently framed in terms of scandal. The expected odds of the Italian campaign messages including the Scandal Frame were 4.5 times greater than the U.S.. Similar to Brazil, it was also observed in the Italian case

⁹³ This company created the world's biggest bribery ring, *CNN* (05/06/12). [Online] Available: <http://money.cnn.com/2017/04/05/news/economy/odebrecht-latin-america-corruption/index.html>.

that a substantial difference between the press and the SNS existed with respect to the proportion of articles or online messages that included this aspect. While the Scandal Frame was overall present in 15.9% of the Italian newspaper articles analyzed, the same aspect was only included in 3.6% of the parties' SNS messages/videos. This already considerable difference between those two types of media, 4.4 times larger for the press, could be even higher since some news articles dealing extensively with scandals involving some prominent campaign actors were not presented in the "Campaign Section" of the newspaper (which content was analyzed) but shown instead in sections created specifically for those scandals. Even though the visibility of the Scandal Frame was lower in Italy, compared to Brazil, the diversity of the topic was nevertheless richer in the Italian case. While in Brazil the examples were mostly related to political corruption and some irregularities in the campaigns, in the Italian case the scandals ranged from financial mismanagement and corruption to misogynistic comments and forged curriculums of party leaders.

Finally, the Portuguese election had the lowest salience of the Scandal Frame, even though the difference was neither substantial nor statistically significant compared to the U.S.. The Portuguese campaign was just 16% less likely than the U.S. campaign to include this frame. Although the overall salience of this aspect in the Portuguese case was comparatively low, the difference between the press and the SNS was nevertheless substantial. The Scandal Frame was present in 6.4% of the newspaper articles while only 0.6% of the social media content included this aspect. Furthermore, as we saw in the previous chapter, only two of the four main Portuguese parties (PS and BE) discussed this aspect in their online messages.

Overall, the results do not suggest that the Scandal Frame was more salient in any particular type of election (presidential or parliamentary). The salience of this frame was considerably higher in two elections (Italy and Brazil) simply because the campaign happened to coincide with a series of events exposing misconduct and questionable acts of actors linked to the main political parties that had serious economic and financial implications in those two countries. Nevertheless, the results clearly show that, independently of how salient the Scandal Frame is in one particular electoral campaign, the journalists will pay considerably more attention to it than the different political parties and candidates.

When we control for the parties/candidates, in the third model, the differences between the media remain significant, even if it only considers the newspaper articles focusing exclusively on one of the 13 parties/candidates analyzed. On the one hand, Twitter remains the online platform with the lowest salience of the Scandal Frame, about 7.6 times lower than in newspaper articles. On the other hand, the SNS that most frequently included political

scandals in its content was YouTube. Nevertheless, compared to the press, YouTube was, in terms of the expected odds for both categories, almost 4 times less likely to include the Scandal Frame in its campaign messages.

Regarding the differences between parties and candidates, the results mostly reflect the different levels of salience that the Scandal Frame had in the four elections. Unsurprisingly, using Obama as the reference category, the Scandal Frame was significantly more frequently used in the campaigns of all Italian Parties and Brazilian candidates. There were not, however, significant differences between the two U.S. candidates regarding the salience of this aspect.

In the Italian case, the Scandal Frame was more salient in the campaign of M5S. The campaign messages of this Italian party were 7.5 times more likely to discuss political scandals than the content related to Obama's campaign. This result essentially reflects the anti-system and anti-corruption rhetoric of this movement that did its best to capitalize on the major political scandals, an approach that, considering the electoral results of the party, ended up being successful. On the other hand, from the four Italian parties analyzed, it was in the campaign of the incumbent party, Monti's newly created Scelta Civica, where the Scandal Frame was less salient. Even though Scelta's campaign was two times as likely as Obama's to include the Scandal Frame, Scelta's expected odds of including this frame were 3.7 times lower than the odds of M5S. This result further reinforces the idea that, in the Italian election, it was Scelta Civica that conducted the most informative, or positive, campaign. The campaign of Scelta Civica not only had the lowest salience of the Scandal Frame, but it also had, as we previously saw, the lowest salience of conflict and the highest salience of the Issues Frame.

Regarding the salience of the Scandal Frame in the Brazilian parties, the results are identical to the Italian example in two ways. The first is that, as it was already mentioned, all of the three Brazilian candidates analyzed had more scandal-driven campaigns than Obama, even though this is not per se a very meaningful comparison. The second one is that it was also the incumbent candidate that had the campaign less focused on that aspect. Even though the odds of Dilma's campaign including the Scandal Frame were 2.8 times greater than Obama, they were nevertheless considerably smaller than the expected odds of the other two Brazilian candidates. Compared to Dilma, the expected odds of the two other candidates, Aécio and Marina, dealing with political scandals in the campaign messages and news articles were, respectively, 5.3 and 3.2 times greater. The fact that the Lava Jato investigations mostly affected Dilma's party might have contributed to this situation. The few times when this particular scandal was discussed by Dilma, it was to distance herself from it and to say that

one of the main priorities in her new government would be to fight corruption in public agencies and companies.

Finally, with respect the frequency of the Scandal Frame in the Portuguese election, there were some substantial differences between the four Portuguese parties. Two of them, the incumbent and the communist coalitions, PaF and CDU, had campaigns with a very low salience of this aspect. Compared to Obama, the expected odds of the news articles and campaign messages of PaF and CDU including the Scandal Frame were 4.4 and 9.4 times lower, respectively. In the case of PS, the salience of the Scandal Frame was practically identical to the salience of this aspect in the campaign of the incumbent U.S. candidate. Finally, it was in the campaign of BE that, from all of the four Portuguese parties analyzed, the Scandal Frame was more frequently used. The campaign of BE was three times as likely as Obama's campaign to have discussed political scandals.

The results do not suggest that factors such as the size or ideology of the party/candidate might explain the salience of the Scandal Frame in the electoral campaigns. However, similar to the Conflict Frame, challengers seem to be in general more likely to discuss this topic in their campaigns than the incumbent parties and candidates. This was the case in the Italian and Brazilian elections, where the Scandal Frame was significantly less salient in the campaigns of Scelta and Dilma, compared to the campaigns of their challengers'. In the U.S., even though the campaign of Obama was not the one where political scandals were least salient, the visibility of this aspect was practically identical in the campaigns of both candidates. In Portugal, the incumbent coalition was one of the two parties analyzed (the other being CDU) that had the lowest salience of the Scandal Frame in the campaign, with the differences between those two parties not being statistically significant. Even though the limited number of cases does not allow us to draw strong conclusions about this idea, using the data of these four elections, the odds of challenging parties/candidates including the Scandal Frame are around 2.7 times greater than the odds of incumbent parties/candidates.

Overall, even though the percentage of the SNS content that dealt with political scandals, in the entire dataset, was relatively small (2.45%), the proportion of newspaper articles that included this aspect was 6.7 times greater. The effect of the type of media (traditional vs social media) in the salience of sandal is huge. The results revealed that, on the one hand, journalists were much more likely, compared to the candidates and parties, to report and discuss political scandals during electoral campaigns, even in the countries where the overall salience of this aspect was considerably higher (Italy and Brazil). On the other hand, parties and candidates, particularly incumbents, to some extent refrain from using and

discussing political scandals, either to attack their opponents or to defend themselves from them.

It is clear, in the four elections, the newsworthiness attributed by the journalists to these aspects, either because of a public logic perspective and watchdog journalism (when the traditional media think that it is important for the citizens to be aware of the wrongdoings of politicians and parties), or simply because of a media logic perspective (the expectation that the salience of political scandals can lead to more print sales). Similarly to what Mutz & Reeves (2005) found for uncivil exchanges between candidates, the focus on scandals might increase citizens' interest in the news articles about the election given that politics, in general, is not an overly exciting topic for most of them.

One final aspect that is important to mention is that, similar to Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict, the salience of political scandals, even though it apparently does not have a strong impact in the electoral outcomes (Muñoz et al. 2012), has a predictably perverse effect on the citizens attitudes towards political institutions. The salience and accumulation of political scandals in the media increases the citizens' political cynicism (e.g. Tumber, 2004; Bowler & Karp, 2004), an effect that is stronger among individuals with already lower levels of political trust (Dancey, 2011). Overall, what the literature suggests is that the continuous salience of political scandals in the media generates a spiral of political cynicism that can eventually undermine the democratic institutions. This might explain why, compared to journalists, politicians are less keen to discuss political scandals in their electoral campaigns, even when those scandals could potentially bring them, in the short term, electoral advantages. It might also explain why some newly created parties with an anti-corruption agenda, such it was M5S in Italy, can seem so appealing to the electorate and have, when the events fit the message, successful electoral results.

Overall the analysis of the salience of Scandal Frame, in the traditional media and the SNS, highlighted a difference that might become important for the future of democratic institutions. Even though the visibility of political scandals is relatively high in the press, the political parties and candidates, comparatively, clearly avoid discussing those aspects in their campaigns. This suggests that, as social media increasingly becomes a more important arena for political communication (which is evident from the extensive use that the majority of the candidates and parties analyzed made of those online platforms) the Internet can indeed become, as some authors and campaign managers anticipated, an important instrument to restore and increase the citizens' trust in their elected officials. To put it differently, the results suggest that the new media that allow parties and candidates to bypass the journalists and

communicate directly to citizens, with a relatively low cost, have the potential to, overall, contribute to more positive electoral campaigns, with lower salience of both political scandals and conflict. However, it is also true that not only parties and candidates generate political content in cyberspace.

8.5 - Media-Relations Frame.

The fifth aspect analyzed in this chapter is the Media-Relations Frame. This topic focuses on the relationships between politicians and journalists during the electoral campaigns. It includes articles and messages about politicians trying to influence their news coverage or how the "real" campaign of the parties is being distorted by the traditional media. In this case, it can also be seen as indicator of how good, or bad, the relationship between politicians and the traditional media is in the four countries analyzed, and which parties or candidates more frequently discussed or criticized the options made by the traditional media during the campaign.

As we can see in the first model in Table 15, compared to the press, the salience of this frame was considerably lower on all of the three SNS, which does not confirm the *H3c* hypothesis. The Media-Relations Frame was not, in general, a very salient aspect in any of the four campaigns analyzed. Overall, this aspect was only included in 3.2% of the newspaper articles and 1.1% of the SNS messages. For this reason, the variation between categories regarding the presence of this frame, even when it is statistically significant, does not necessarily indicate substantive or very meaningful differences. Nevertheless, the results show us that it was on YouTube that this frame was less salient. The odds of a newspaper article including the Media-Relations Frame were more than 52 times greater than on YouTube. This result essentially means that this aspect was practically absent from the content of YouTube. In fact, from the 1355 YouTube videos analyzed, only two dealt extensively with this specific topic. The expected odds for the other two SNS were also considerably higher compared to the press, being 3.4 times greater for Twitter and 3.2 times greater for YouTube. Even though these results suggests that this frame was considerably more salient on Twitter and Facebook than on YouTube, the concrete differences between the three SNS in the salience of this aspect were practically insignificant. In general, the extremely low salience of this frame did not allow any particularly meaningful interpretation besides being practically never included in YouTube videos.

The results of the comparison between countries and parties/candidates, in the second and third models, allow slightly more meaningful and interesting interpretations. With respect to differences among countries, it was in the Italian campaign that this aspect was more salient. The Italian case was almost 6.8 times as likely as the U.S. to include the Media-Relations Frame in the news articles and the SNS content. Even though this difference does not necessarily mean that this frame was very salient in Italy, it nevertheless suggests that, compared to the other three campaigns analyzed, it paid considerably more attention, in the Italian campaign, to the interactions and relationship between journalists and political candidates. However, this difference resulted mostly from the campaign of two Italian parties, PdL and M5S, particularly the latter.

Compared to all of parties and candidates analyzed, the salience of the Media-Relations Frame was considerably higher in the campaign of M5S. The odds of campaign material and news articles of M5S including this frame were more than 22 times greater than the expected odds for Obama. In fact, it was only in the campaign of this Italian party that the salience of this media frame was remotely substantial. From all of the material of M5S analyzed, approximately 9% of it dealt extensively with the relationship between the party and the traditional media. Even though the difference was much smaller, the campaign of PdL was also more likely than all of the other candidates and parties analyzed, with the exception of M5S, to include this Media Frame. The odds of the content in PdL's campaign including the Media-Relations Frame were 3.7 times larger than the odds of Obama. Nevertheless, the proportion of campaign material from PdL that included this frame was very small (1.6%). With respect to the remaining parties, even though the salience of this frame was extremely low for all of them, it was the lowest in the campaigns of Marina Silva in Brazil and CDU in Portugal.

To conclude, there were only two relevant results from the comparative analysis of the salience of the Media-Relations Frame. The first one is that this frame is not very frequent in the news coverage and political actors' campaigns on social media, being almost entirely absent from the campaign on YouTube. The second is that this media frame was more salient in the campaign of M5S than in all of the other 12 parties/candidates combined. This result reflects the fact that the Italian traditional media was a major target in the campaign of M5S, either because of favoring more established parties like PD or PdL, or not paying enough attention and distorting their campaign.

Table 15 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Media-Relations Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Media Relations						
Twitter	-1.236*** (0.168)	0.290*** (0.0487)	-1.253*** (0.166)	0.286*** (0.0475)	-1.831*** (0.225)	0.160*** (0.0360)
Facebook	-1.168*** (0.184)	0.311*** (0.0574)	-1.202*** (0.186)	0.301*** (0.0559)	-1.666*** (0.249)	0.189*** (0.0470)
YouTube	-3.956*** (0.730)	0.0191*** (0.0140)	-3.788*** (0.743)	0.0226*** (0.0168)	-2.963*** (0.720)	0.0517*** (0.0372)
Italy			1.900*** (0.306)	6.686*** (2.044)		
Brazil			0.289 (0.361)	1.335 (0.482)		
Portugal			0.591* (0.356)	1.806* (0.643)		
Romney					0.0244 (0.829)	1.025 (0.850)
PD					0.576 (0.599)	1.780 (1.067)
PdL					1.320*** (0.467)	3.744*** (1.747)
Scelta					-0.308 (0.629)	0.735 (0.462)
M5S					3.105*** (0.458)	22.30*** (10.21)
Dilma					0.486 (0.640)	1.626 (1.041)
Accio					-0.712 (0.827)	0.491 (0.406)
Marina					-1.748 (1.099)	0.174 (0.191)
PaF					-0.234 (0.627)	0.791 (0.496)
PS					0.596 (0.593)	1.815 (1.076)
BE					0.420 (0.587)	1.522 (0.893)
CDU					-1.675 (1.093)	0.187 (0.205)
Constant	-3.377*** (0.120)	0.0342*** (0.00408)	-4.401*** (0.313)	0.0123*** (0.00385)	-3.759*** (0.486)	0.0233*** (0.0113)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

8.6 - Personalization Frame.

The sixth aspect analyzed is the Personalization Frame. Similar to the different topics previously examined in this chapter, with the exception of the Issues Frame, the presence of the Personalization Frame was lower on all of the three SNS compared to the press, with the differences being statistically significant on all of them and confirming the *H3b* hypothesis. As we can see in the first model of Table 16, from the social media categories, it was on

Twitter that this aspect was less frequently included. The odds of the press framing the articles in terms of personalization were almost 2.4 times higher than Twitter. On the other hand, it was in YouTube, from the three SNS, where this aspect was more salient. The difference between YouTube and the press, compared to the other two other SNS, was not only less salient but also less statistically significant. The expected odds of YouTube videos including the Personalization aspect, in the first model, were around 38% smaller than the press. In the case of Facebook, the likelihood of the press including the Personalization Frame in the news articles was 78% larger than the likelihood of this SNS including it.

When we include the country variables, in the second model, there is one change in YouTube regarding the salience of the Personalization Frame on this platform. In fact, when controlling for the differences between parties, YouTube ceases to differ from the press in terms of the presence of this frame. The difference between the expected odds for both media (YouTube and the press) becomes smaller than 9%. On the other hand, in the case of the two other two online platforms, Twitter and Facebook, the differences between these SNS and the press remain essentially the same.

Regarding the differences between countries, the salience of the Personalization Frame was similar in three of the elections analyzed (the U.S., Italy and Brazil). The differences between these three countries, with respect to the frequency of this topic, were neither statistically significant nor substantial. Despite the differences being almost insignificant, it was nevertheless Italy that had the campaign with the highest salience of the Personalization Frame. The expected odds of the Italian campaign including that frame were about 16% larger than the odds of the U.S.. On the other hand, the Portuguese campaign, compared to the other three, was considerably less focused on the candidates' personal aspects.

The results did not show a clear pattern between type of election and salience of the Personalization Frame. The hypothesis that personalization aspects would be more salient in presidential elections, compared to parliamentary, was not confirmed. It is, however, possible that this type of comparison was to some extent distorted by the fact that the Italian case was one the two parliamentary elections analyzed. Italy has been considered, after Berlusconi's political debut in the early 1990s, one of the most outstanding examples of personalization of politics, with the campaigns, since then, being "organized around the leaders, with the clear aim of directing the media's attention to their personal characteristics" (Campus, 2010, p.224). In addition to this, the director of the Cofindustria, Innocenzo Cipolletta, also accused the main protagonists in this particular election of conducting an extremely personalized campaign to the detriment of discussing, more frequently and with more detail, substantive

political issues⁹⁴. The fact that the Personalization Frame was considerably less salient in the Portuguese case shows that parliamentary elections can indeed be much less centered around the leaders' personal characteristics, compared to presidential elections, and that Italy might simply be an outlier in this respect.

Table 16 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Personalization Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Personalization						
Twitter	-0.866*** (0.106)	0.421*** (0.0446)	-0.774*** (0.104)	0.461*** (0.0480)	-1.199*** (0.131)	0.302*** (0.0395)
Facebook	-0.575*** (0.137)	0.562*** (0.0769)	-0.563*** (0.139)	0.569*** (0.0793)	-1.082*** (0.161)	0.339*** (0.0545)
YouTube	-0.325** (0.156)	0.723** (0.113)	-0.0859 (0.155)	0.918 (0.142)	-0.535*** (0.160)	0.585*** (0.0934)
Italy			0.147 (0.118)	1.158 (0.137)		
Brazil			-0.0329 (0.142)	0.968 (0.137)		
Portugal			-1.593*** (0.186)	0.203*** (0.0378)		
Romney					0.0501 (0.234)	1.051 (0.246)
PD					-0.114 (0.181)	0.892 (0.162)
PdL					0.391*** (0.135)	1.479*** (0.200)
Scelta					0.198 (0.152)	1.219 (0.185)
M5S					-1.426*** (0.283)	0.240*** (0.0680)
Dilma					-0.591** (0.268)	0.554** (0.149)
Accio					-0.354* (0.196)	0.702* (0.137)
Marina					0.440*** (0.150)	1.552*** (0.233)
PaF					-1.407*** (0.240)	0.245*** (0.0588)
PS					-0.905*** (0.247)	0.405*** (0.0999)
BE					-3.120*** (0.590)	0.0442*** (0.0261)
CDU					-3.607*** (0.717)	0.0271*** (0.0195)
Constant	-2.411*** (0.0760)	0.0897*** (0.00682)	-2.260*** (0.119)	0.104*** (0.0125)	-1.711*** (0.166)	0.181*** (0.0299)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

⁹⁴ Marcegaglia promuove Giannino: «Programma coraggioso», *Corriere della Sera* (11/02/13).

Finally, the third model, where the parties' and candidates' variables are included, also reports some interesting results. In this model YouTube becomes, again, considerably less likely to include the Personalization Frame. The expected odds of YouTube videos including the Personalization Frame are 71% smaller than the odds of the press including that aspect. Similarly to what we observed for other media frames, this essentially results from the fact that the subset of newspaper articles that exclusively focused on one of the political parties/candidates analyzed were more likely to include the Personalization Frame.

Regarding the difference between parties and candidates, only two campaigns were significantly more likely, compared to Obama's campaign, to deal extensively with personal characteristics and aspects of the political actors. These were the campaigns of PdL in Italy and Marina Silva in Brazil. It is interesting to see that, in the Italian election, it was indeed the party of Silvio Berlusconi, that in a way introduced personalization to Italian politics, that conducted the campaign more focused on this aspect. The odds of Berlusconi campaign including the Personalization Frame were 48% greater than Obama. Compared to the expected odds of PD, the odds of PdL having the Personalization Frame in its campaign material and articles were also 66% greater. It was, however, Marina's campaign, from all parties and candidates analyzed, that more frequently included the Personalization Frame, even though the difference to PdL's campaign was very small. As we saw, the unusual events that surrounded Marina's presidential bid contributed to the salience of the Personalization Frame in her campaign. The personal history of this candidate (e.g. the material deprivation in her childhood, being illiterate for a long period and religious beliefs) was a frequently discussed topic in her campaign.

Using Obama's campaign as the reference category, there were seven cases where the salience of the Personalization Frame was significantly lower. All of the four Portuguese parties were, in a significant way, less likely than Obama to include the Personalization Frame in their campaigns. The Personalization Frame was practically absent from the campaign of two of them, CDU and BE, both far-left parties. The expected odds of Obama's campaign including the Personalization Frame were 37 and 23 times greater than the expected odds of CDU and BE, respectively, including the same aspect. Even though with slightly less significant differences, the campaigns of Dilma and Aécio in Brazil were also less likely to include the Personalization Frame than Obama's campaign. Finally, the other party less likely than Obama to include the Personalization Frame was M5S. From all of the 13 campaigns analyzed, it was this Italian party that had the lowest salience of the Personalization Frame in its news articles and SNS messages. The expected odds of the M5S campaign having the

Personalization Frame were more than four times smaller than the odds of Obama including it. This result suggests that the popularity of the leader does not necessarily increase the level of personalization in the electoral campaigns. Even though Beppe Grillo was a well-known public figure in Italy, the campaign of his party did not focus on aspects related to his personal life and personal characteristics. In fact, M5S, similarly to other movements that used the Internet to build large and diversified communities, campaigned on the idea that everyone in the party had the same voice and opportunities, and that the party was not owned by anyone.

Overall the Personalization Frame was not a very frequent aspect in the campaigns analyzed. This does not necessarily mean that the personalization of politics played a relatively small role in the elections. The way this frame was conceptualized in this analysis (not considering, for example, articles or messages more focused on the leader than the party) contributed to this outcome. In the end, the idea was to have, by focusing only on messages dealing with personal aspects and characteristics of the candidates, a more refined way of assessing different levels of personalization in the four campaigns analyzed and a more meaningful way of comparing different media, types of elections and types of political actors (candidates and political parties).

Nevertheless, the comparative analysis of the salience of the Personalization Frame highlights three important aspects. The first is that, if we treat Italy as an unrepresentative example, the personal characteristics of political candidates is an aspect significantly more salient in presidential campaigns. The second aspect is that anti-establishment and far-left parties seem to considerably less focus on the personal characteristics of their leaders. The third and final aspect is that, contrary to what was suggested by some authors, the personalization of campaigns does not seem to be related to the salience that the Issues Frame had in those campaigns. In other words, focusing more on the personal characteristics of the main candidates does not seem to be necessarily a strategy employed by the parties and candidates to avoid the discussion of more substantive political aspects in their campaigns. There were examples that both support and contradict this idea.

8.7 - Human-Interest Frame.

The seventh media frame analyzed in this chapter is the Human-Interest Frame. These are the videos, articles and messages that give a face or human example for specific problems and events, appealing to the emotions of the viewers and readers. This frame is used by the

traditional media, particularly television, to make events more appealing and interesting to the audience but it can also be used by the political parties and candidates to appear more in touch with citizens and with the problems they face. As we can see in the first model of Table 17, there was some interesting differences, in the salience of this frame, between the different types of media analyzed. First of all, this aspect was significantly more salient on YouTube than in the other three media. The odds of YouTube videos including this frame were 64% larger than the odds of the press. Secondly, Facebook did not differ much from the newspaper articles with respect to the salience of these aspects. Finally, it was on Twitter that this frame was least frequently observed. The expected odds of the press and YouTube including this frame were respectively 81% and 196% larger than those of Twitter.

Overall, the salience of this aspect differed quite considerably on the three social media, suggesting that some types of SNS are more suitable to convey the Human-Interest Frame. The results mostly show that the video format is indeed more frequently used by the parties and candidates to illustrate, with human examples, a problem or to appeal to the emotions of the electorate in their campaigns. However, it is important to highlight the fact that, in general, Human-Interest was not a very common frame in these four electoral campaigns. These results, in terms of expected odds, do not necessarily imply big differences in the proportions of news articles and SNS material that included this aspect.

When we include the country variables, in model 2, the results show some interesting aspects about the four elections analyzed, besides a small increase in all of the coefficients of SNS that does not produce any significant differences. The Human-Interest Frame was considerably more salient in the U.S. campaign than in the other three elections. Compared to Italy, which was the country that less frequently presented the Human-Interest Frame, the U.S. campaign was 6.8 times more likely to include this aspect. After Italy, it was in the Portuguese election that this aspect was less frequently used. The odds of the Portuguese online material and news articles including the Human-Interest Frame were 2.3 times lower than the odds of the U.S.. Finally, compared to Brazil, the expected odds of the U.S. campaign including this frame were only 48% larger.

Even though this analysis only includes four countries, the results show that this media frame was more frequently used in the two countries that had presidential elections. These countries with presidential elections (the U.S. and Brazil) were 2.4 times as likely as the parliamentary (Italy and Portugal) to include the Human-Interest aspect. It is however difficult to hypothesize the reasons for this difference and if it is in fact related to the type of election.

Table 17 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the Presence of the Human-Interest Frame in the social media messages and press articles from four electoral campaigns.

	(1)		(2)		(3)	
	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
Human-Interest						
Twitter	-0.593*** (0.150)	0.553*** (0.0832)	-0.440*** (0.154)	0.644*** (0.0995)	-1.165*** (0.182)	0.312*** (0.0568)
Facebook	-0.0477 (0.148)	0.953 (0.141)	0.174 (0.156)	1.190 (0.186)	-0.391** (0.189)	0.677** (0.128)
YouTube	0.493*** (0.169)	1.637*** (0.276)	0.658*** (0.164)	1.931*** (0.317)	-0.00373 (0.188)	0.996 (0.187)
Italy			-1.368*** (0.173)	0.255*** (0.0441)		
Brazil			-0.392** (0.164)	0.676** (0.111)		
Portugal			-0.818*** (0.165)	0.441*** (0.0728)		
Romney					-0.708** (0.284)	0.493** (0.140)
PD					-1.247*** (0.232)	0.287*** (0.0668)
PdL					-3.256*** (0.395)	0.0386*** (0.0152)
Scelta					-1.198*** (0.210)	0.302*** (0.0634)
M5S					-1.221*** (0.233)	0.295*** (0.0689)
Dilma					-0.202 (0.212)	0.817 (0.173)
Accio					-0.839*** (0.202)	0.432*** (0.0873)
Marina					-0.669*** (0.185)	0.512*** (0.0950)
PaF					-0.841*** (0.177)	0.431*** (0.0763)
PS					-1.826*** (0.320)	0.161*** (0.0515)
BE					-0.442** (0.180)	0.642** (0.116)
CDU					-1.197*** (0.233)	0.302*** (0.0705)
Constant	-2.934*** (0.103)	0.0532*** (0.00548)	-2.457*** (0.139)	0.0857*** (0.0120)	-1.733*** (0.190)	0.177*** (0.0336)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	14,682	14,682

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, (**) $p < 0.05$, (*) $p < 0.1$. Reference Categories: Press; U.S. and Obama.

Indeed, it might be the fact that people vote for candidates, rather than political parties, that makes this media frame more effective or suitable for those campaigns and, for that reason, more frequently used. But it can also be that other characteristics shared by those countries explain the higher salience of the Human-Interest Frame. For example, it is possible that the style of the TV ads, which often include strong and emotional messages and are key elements in the campaigns of those countries, ended up being reflected in the content conveyed by the candidates in the other communication channels. Also the size of the country

could as well explain the salience of this frame in the U.S. and Brazil. In very large countries where, for that reason, direct contacts between citizens and politicians become much scarcer, this media frame might be used to manufacture some sort of emotional connection by portraying, for example, the candidate as someone close to the citizens and aware of the problems they face. Overall, even though the results could at the first glance suggest it, we cannot be sure that the type of election was the responsible factor for the salience of the Human-Interest Frame in the American and Brazilian campaigns.

When we include the party/candidate variables, in the third model, we can observe some changes in the expected odds of the three SNS. All of these online platforms become less likely, compared to the press, to include the Human-Interest Frame in their messages. In the case of Facebook the differences even become statistically significant. Once again, these results mostly reflect the fact that the news articles that were focused on only one of the candidates/parties analyzed were also more likely to include the Human-Interest Frame. More concretely, this frame was included in 6.9% of the newspaper articles that were focused exclusively on one of the 13 candidates/parties analyzed, while this aspect was only included in 4.1% of observations that were dropped in the third model.

Regarding the differences between candidates/parties, it was in the campaign of Obama that the Human-Interest Frame was most frequently used. With the exception of Dilma, the differences between Obama and the other actors analyzed were always statistically significant. On the other hand, PdL conducted, by large, the campaign less likely to include this Media Frame. To be more precise, Obama was almost 26 times as likely as PdL to include the Human-Interest Frame in the campaign messages and articles.

These results also show that the higher salience that the Human-Interest Frame had in the two presidential systems resulted to a large extent from the campaign of the two incumbent candidates. Also in the Italian case, the party of the incumbent Prime-Minister, Scelta Civica, was likelier than the other Italian parties to have this aspect included in its campaign, even though the differences were not as substantial as they were in the U.S. and Brazil. Overall, the comparison between candidates and parties suggests that incumbent actors were more likely to frame their campaigns in terms of Human-Interest than the challengers, particular in the two countries with a presidential system. However, since the salience of this media frame was in general relatively low, even substantial and statistically significant differences in the expected odds of the different media, countries and candidates/parties do not necessarily mean that the salience of the Human-Interest Frame was noticeably higher in one particular election or type of media. To put it in other words, it is not very likely that

someone following those campaigns closely would notice the differences.

8.8 - First/Main media frames.

The final comparison made in this chapter concerns the use of the three most important media frames in the political campaigns (Strategy/Horse-Race, Issues and Conflict) as the first aspects discussed in the news articles and social media content. As we saw, since the different media frames are not mutually exclusive, which means that one article or SNS item can deal extensively with more than one those aspects, the analysis of the frames shown first in the news articles and SNS items gives us a more complete picture of the aspects that were relevant in the electoral campaigns. This becomes particularly important when articles, videos and social media messages are longer, with the inclusion of additional information in the main message. In those cases the first frame presented in the message gives a strong cue and context for the public to place the received information.

Even though the Facebook and YouTube content can be long and deal with multiple campaign aspects, and also Twitter messages might include additional information in its text (e.g. videos and articles), it is more likely for newspapers to have, in the same article, more than one media frame. It is common that journalists deal extensively in the same article with, for example, the strategies of the candidates and their positions on certain political issues. For this reason, if we treat the different frames as mutually exclusive aspects of the messages (i.e. one item can only have one—the first—frame), the salience of each media frame should decrease more noticeably in the case of the press. As a result of this, we expect that the difference between the press and the SNS will decrease, if that media frame was overall more salient in the press (Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict Frames), or increase, when the media frame was more salient on the SNS (Issues Frame). For this reason, the main question here is to see whether the differences between the press and the SNS remain significant, in the case of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict, when we treat the media frames as mutually exclusive aspects. The results are presented in Table 18.

In the first model, the dependent variable is the use of Strategy/Horse-Race Frame as the first frame presented in the news articles and SNS items. It was on YouTube that this frame was less frequently used as the first aspect of the messages. The odds of YouTube videos dealing first with this frame were around 58% lower than those of the press. In a similar way, Twitter was also significantly less likely than the press to have this aspect presented as the first topic of the message. The expected odds of newspaper articles dealing

first with these aspects were almost 30% higher than the odds of Twitter messages. These two results further reinforce the idea that, compared to the journalists' news articles, the Strategy/Horse-Race topic was less salient in the campaigns that parties and candidates conducted on Twitter and YouTube. Not only was this frame, overall, less frequently included on those two SNS, but it was also less often the first and main aspect of their messages.

Table 18 - Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis to investigate the use of Strategy/Horse-Race, Issues and Conflict as the first aspect presented in the social media messages and press articles.

VARIABLES	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio	Logit coeff	Odds ratio
	FF Strategy/ Horse-Race		FF Issues		FF Conflict	
Twitter	-0.258*** (0.0536)	0.773*** (0.0414)	0.821*** (0.0702)	2.272*** (0.160)	0.105 (0.0721)	1.111 (0.0801)
Facebook	0.0541 (0.0627)	1.056 (0.0662)	0.620*** (0.0835)	1.859*** (0.155)	0.0467 (0.0867)	1.048 (0.0908)
YouTube	-0.460*** (0.0921)	0.631*** (0.0582)	1.061*** (0.102)	2.888*** (0.296)	0.0774 (0.118)	1.080 (0.127)
Italy	-0.368*** (0.0729)	0.692*** (0.0504)	0.448*** (0.0823)	1.565*** (0.129)	-0.164* (0.0974)	0.849* (0.0827)
Brazil	0.108 (0.0781)	1.114 (0.0871)	0.0487 (0.0937)	1.050 (0.0984)	-0.562*** (0.106)	0.570*** (0.0606)
Portugal	0.390*** (0.0717)	1.476*** (0.106)	0.0159 (0.0847)	1.016 (0.0860)	-0.463*** (0.101)	0.629*** (0.0637)
Constant	-0.0507 (0.0432)	0.951 (0.0410)	-2.029*** (0.0913)	0.131*** (0.0120)	-1.454*** (0.0892)	0.234*** (0.0208)
Observations	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267	16,267

Note: Robust standard errors in parentheses (***) $p < 0.01$, (**) $p < 0.05$, (*) $p < 0.1$). Reference Categories: Press and U.S..

The same, however, cannot be said about the campaign on Facebook. Even though, as we saw in Table 11, Facebook content was overall less likely than the press to include the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, the differences between these two media practically disappear if we only look at the articles and online messages where Strategy/Horse-Race was the primary aspect discussed. In this aspect, considering only the first frame of each story, the Facebook campaign did not differ much from the press in terms of the salience of Strategy/Horse-Race. This result reinforces the idea that parties and candidates to a certain extent use the various SNS for different campaign purposes. Compared to Twitter and YouTube, Facebook is more frequently used by the candidates and parties to illustrate and show to the electorate the way they are conducting their campaigns, their position in the polls, the possible outcomes of the election and also what the followers can do to support their campaigns.

With respect to the differences between countries, the results reflect what we had found for the overall salience of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame in those countries. The elections that were more likely to have this frame in the campaign were also more likely to have it as the first aspect discussed in the messages and articles. Firstly, in the Italian election

this frame was less frequently used as the primary aspect of the campaign content. Secondly, Portugal was the country more likely to have the Strategy/Horse-Race aspect as the first aspect discussed in the messages analyzed. Lastly, the difference between the U.S. and Brazil, now with respect to the use of this aspect as the story's first frame, remains insignificant.

A second aspect presented in Table 18, in the second model, is the use of the Issues Frame as the primary aspect included in the stories and articles. As we previously saw, this frame was in general more likely to be seen in the online campaign of the parties and candidates than in the journalists' news coverage of the election. This difference had been particularly large in the case of YouTube. When we look at news articles and the SNS content that primarily dealt with the Issues Frame, the differences between the press and the SNS become more substantial, particularly in the case of Twitter. Even though the odds of Twitter having the Issues Frame in the messages are 40% larger than the press, this platform is 2.3 times as likely as the press to have that frame used as the primary aspect of the message. On YouTube, where the overall presence of this frame was considerably higher than in the press, the odds of this online platform having videos focusing primarily on substantive political issues are almost three times greater than newspaper having their articles focusing primarily on the discussion of those aspects. Facebook was again the online platform with results that were close to the press' results. Nonetheless, the odds of Facebook messages focusing primarily on substantive political issues were still 86% larger than the odds of the press.

Overall, compared to the SNS campaigns, not only is the press less likely to include the Issues Frame in the articles, but it is also considerably less likely to have them as the first and primary aspect of the story. In fact, more than half of the newspaper articles analyzed, which included substantive political issues, dealt primarily with other aspects such as Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict. To be more precise, while 30.6% of the newspaper articles included the Issues Frame, only 14% of the newspaper content analyzed focused primarily on this aspect. Overall, these results clearly show that conveying the parties' and candidates' positions on relevant political issues is very rarely the priority of journalists when reporting political campaigns. Regarding this aspect the parties and candidates performed much better in their SNS campaigns. In other words, parties and candidates give overall more salience and priority to the discussion of substantive political issues in their campaigns than journalists do in their news coverage of the election.

When we look at the use of the Issues Frame as the first and main aspect of the campaign content, we can also observe some differences between Italy and the other three elections. Even though this frame was in general more frequent in the U.S. election, it was

more often used as the first topic of the messages in the Italian campaign, mostly due to the online campaign conducted by the Italian parties. The odds of the Issues Frame being the first frame presented in the Italian election were 57% larger than in the U.S. case. In the case of Brazil and Portugal the odds of those elections having the Issues Frame as the first aspect of the messages were practically identical to the U.S.. It is, however, important to note that these are very broad comparisons that do not fully reflect some of the differences between the press and the SNS in those elections. If we were to compare only the press, for example, it was in Portugal that the Issues Frame was more frequently used as the main and first aspect of the articles.

Finally, regarding conflict being the first frame included in the messages and articles, the results evidence an interesting aspect that was previously highlighted and discussed in the case-study chapters. On the one hand, in general, the conflict aspect was considerably more salient in the press compared to the SNS. However, when we look at the proportion of news articles and the SNS content that had conflict as the first and central aspect of the message, the differences between the press and social media completely disappear. As we can see in the third model of Table 16, the expected odds for the three SNS to include conflict as the primary aspect of the message were not only similar to the press (the differences were not statistically significant) but they were even slightly higher.

The main conclusion that we can take from these results is that even though the journalists often include conflict between political actors in the newspaper articles about electoral campaigns, only on relatively few occasions that conflict is the first and main aspect discussed in the story. More precisely, while roughly 45% of the newspaper articles analyzed included conflict between political actors, only 16% of the newspaper articles had conflict as the primary aspect discussed in them. In other words, conflict was often in the journalists' menu but hardly ever as its main dish. This was particularly noticeable in the news coverage of the U.S. presidential election and relates to the journalistic style in the U.S. and the fact that, compared to the other three countries, newspaper articles are in general considerably longer. In the U.S., while the Conflict Frame was present in almost half of the articles, it was only in roughly 10% of the news articles that the Conflict Frame was the first and main aspect in the story. Ultimately, the vast majority of newspaper articles were primarily framed in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race.

With respect to the differences between elections, compared to the overall salience that the Conflict Frame had in the four elections, the picture remains essentially the same when we analyze if conflict was the primary aspect of the messages. It was still in the U.S.

that the Conflict Frame was more frequently used as the first and main aspect present in the messages. However, the difference between the U.S. and Italian elections becomes less significant. The expected odds of using conflict as the first frame in the U.S. election were only 18% larger than in the Italian election. In the case of Brazil and Portugal, the difference to the U.S. remains substantial. The expected odds of the U.S. having conflict as main aspect of the messages was 59% and 75%, respectively, larger than the expected odds for Portugal and Brazil. Again it was in the Brazilian election that conflict was less frequently used as the first frame of the stories and messages. However, as we already saw, only the online campaign of the Brazilian parties, and not the press, contributed to this outcome.

Overall, the results discussed in this chapter showed that Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal were clearly more salient in the press. However, those results only give us a general picture of how the campaigns were framed in the different media. Even though this is the most important aspect to be analyzed, since it corresponds to the overall information that citizens ultimately receive, one could argue that the fact that newspapers are more likely to deal extensively with different campaign aspects in the same article, compared to the SNS, might have contributed to these results. In other words, since news articles are longer, the analysis might overestimate the salience that the frames had in the press compared to the SNS campaigns. The idea here is that it is the nature of the media, more than the priorities and preferences of journalists and parties/candidates, which explains why the general news coverage of electoral campaigns is so different from the online campaigns conducted by the main political actors. However, in this case, we would also expect the Issues Frame to be more salient in the press than in the parties' and candidates' SNS campaigns, which was not confirmed. It also does not explain why the Conflict Frame was included in approximately 45% of the newspaper articles analyzed. Nevertheless, this is a valid and important argument that should also be addressed and investigated in this chapter.

There are two options to address this problem and examine which specific aspects were prioritized the most by both journalists and candidates/parties. The first option, as we have also done to some extent in this chapter and in the four case studies, is to treat the frames as mutually exclusive aspects and only consider the first frame that was presented in the items analyzed. When we use this method to compare the salience of the seven media frames in the two types of media (the press and the SNS) the results, shown in Table 20, remain largely the same. As we already knew, from the three main media frames, the only major change concerns the Conflict Frame, which becomes more salient in the SNS. As discussed already, this result shows that even though conflict between political actors is very often included in

the news articles, that conflict is usually not the primary message conveyed in the articles. However, this result is not that relevant considering that the presence of conflict, irrespective of where it is placed in the article, will distract the viewers from substantive political issues that the story might contain (de Vreese 2003). In the end, regardless of whether it is or is not the central aspect of the story, the Conflict Frame is included in almost half of the newspaper articles reporting the political elections, being also, in most of the cases, used more frequently than the Issues Frame.

The two main differences between the press and the SNS, when we look only at the first frames of each item, are the priority given to political issues and political scandals. While the Issues Frame is more frequently the first frame used in the candidates' and parties' SNS campaigns compared to the press, the percentage of articles in the press that primarily focus on political scandals is considerably higher than in the SNS messages. More specifically, the Issues Frame was the main aspect in 27.8% of the SNS posts and it was only used as the first frame in 14.6% of the newspaper articles. In the case of the Scandal Frame, the topic was the primary aspect of 9.4% of the newspaper articles and of only 1% of the SNS messages.

Table 19 - Salience of the first media frames presented in each newspaper and SNS item.

	Press	SNS
Strategy/Horse-Race Frame	47.3%	42.4%
Conflict Frame	14.7%	15.7%
Issues Frame	14.6%	27.8%
Scandal Frame	9.4%	1%
Personalization Frame	3.6%	2.2%
Human-Interest Frame	2.1%	2.7%
Media-Relations Frame	1.4%	0.7%
Other	7.1%	7.5%

The second way of looking at this aspect is to examine the frequency of each one of the seven media frames in proportion to the total number of frames used in one particular media (either the press or the SNS). In this case the sum of the percentages of all seven media frames will be 100%. We can see the results of this approach in the Figure 111. Once again the results remain essentially the same. Independently of how we look at it, the Issues Frame was always more salient in the SNS campaigns (particularly on Twitter and YouTube) than in the news coverage of the electoral campaigns. Both conflict and scandal are more salient in the press compared to the SNS campaigns. The difference once again is particularly large in

the case of the Scandal Frame. The main difference from what we had seen in this chapter concerns the Strategy/Horse-Race that becomes more salient on Facebook than in the other categories, including the press. These results further reinforce the idea that Facebook is the online platform that offers, in terms of the salience of the different frames, the most similar campaign to the one depicted in the press.

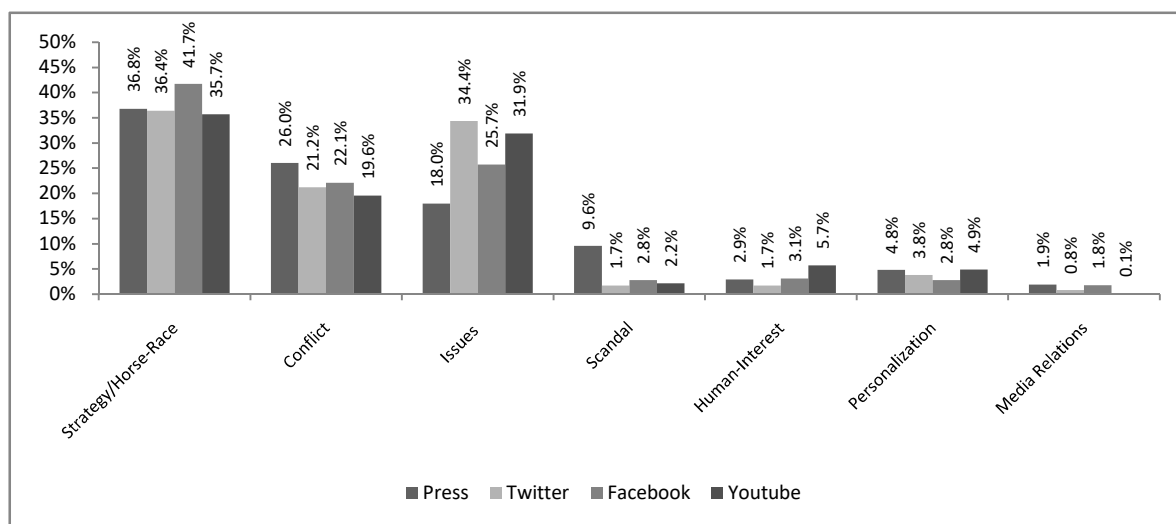


Figure 112 - Salience of media frames in the press and three SNS in proportion to the total number of frames present in each media.

In conclusion, this chapter analyzed and compared, with data from four different elections, the salience of several generic and predefined media frames in both the news coverage made by the press and the main parties' and candidates' SNS campaigns. Consistent with what we had found for each one of the elections in the case studies, the results confirmed that political candidates/parties and journalists frame the electoral campaigns in very distinct ways. While aspects such as Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal were considerably more salient in the press, content dealing with substantive political issues was comparatively more frequent in the parties' and candidates' online campaigns. Overall the results confirmed our *Uninformative News* hypothesis for all of the main media frames analyzed. In other words, the salience of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict in the press did not result, as the *Hollow Campaigns* hypothesis suggested, from a high salience of those aspects in the (online) campaigns conducted by the political actors. This was particularly evident in the case of both Conflict and Scandal aspects.

It is nevertheless important to stress that Strategy and Horse-Race aspects still played, from the seven campaign aspects analyzed, the most prominent role in the online campaigns of the parties and candidates. More than conveying their preferences and positions on certain

policy areas, the majority of the candidates and parties analyzed primarily used the SNS to inform the electorate about how the campaigns were being conducted and what they looked like. However, different to the press, where the second most frequent aspect in the articles was usually conflict, in the online campaigns of the parties the second most salient aspect in the majority of the campaigns analyzed was the discussion and conveyance of substantive political issues.

Chapter Nine - Conclusion

This dissertation examined the media frames used by journalists and political actors in four electoral campaigns from four different countries. By comparing the content that was presented in two types of media, one framed by journalists (the press) and the other framed by the main political parties and candidates (the SNS), the main objective of this work was to investigate if indeed the traditional media, as some authors have already suggested since the early 90s, offers citizens an incomplete and distorted picture of the electoral campaigns.

As discussed, the literature has observed, particularly in the context of the U.S., the traditional news coverage of political events mainly focused on aspects related to Strategy, Horse-Race and Conflict, and often neglects any discussion of substantive political issues, such as the proposals of the candidates within certain policy areas. As discussed, since the traditional media largely remains the main source of political information for most citizens, particularly among older generations, this trend in reporting electoral campaigns has two negative effects on citizens and has important implications for democracy. The first one is that this style of reporting campaigns makes news articles less informative to the audience. For better democratic participation it is crucial that citizens are well informed about the policy preferences and proposals of the different parties and candidates running in the election. In this sense, the fact that substantive political information is either absent or overshadowed by aspects such as Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal, can pose a serious challenge to democracy and society as a whole. The second is that, as shown in the different experimental studies, articles dealing extensively with Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal can increase citizens' political cynicism and reduce their sense of political efficacy. For this reason, the study of this aspect is of great importance.

Despite some awareness and consensus on how electoral campaigns are being depicted in the traditional media, there were nevertheless two gaps in the literature that we tried to address with this study. The first one is that the literature on this subject has been too U.S.-focused. It is little known, especially from a comparative perspective, if this style of reporting political events is also found in countries with different political and media systems. It is for this reason important to see, compared to the U.S. and looking at the exact same aspects, how the media in different countries report their national elections. The second, and most important, is that the responsibility of the journalists for the lack of issues in the news articles, and the salience the other less relevant aspects such as the Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal, is far from clear. On the one hand, some authors hypothesize that characteristics of

the journalists or the commercial logic of the press are responsible for this style of reporting political events. On the other hand, parties and candidates, guided by modern mass marketing strategies or the mediatisation of politics, might be avoiding the discussion of issues. Instead, in order not to alienate the electorate, political candidates discuss and highlight other aspects during their campaigns.

This puzzling responsibility for the lack of substantive issues in the traditional media, and the salience of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict aspects, was the main problem addressed in this dissertation. What we wanted to understand was whether the parties and candidates have the opportunity to frame their own campaigns, which specific aspects would they emphasize, and would those aspects differ considerably from those frequently highlighted by journalists. This could only be possible if candidates and parties had access to a communication channel that allowed them to bypass the traditional media and not be dependent on the political mediatisation effect. In other words: a platform that did not depend on the journalists' decisions and preferences to reach a very large and diverse audience. The Internet, particularly the SNS, offered this opportunity to the parties and candidates.

As we saw, contrary to the other unmediated channels available for political communication, that are either extremely expensive or lack high levels of diffusion, social media give parties and candidates an opportunity to reach and regularly inform a large number of citizens. The fact that social media are nowadays being used by a very large number of people (in 2017 Facebook reached 1.94 billions active users⁹⁵), and that all of the users function as gatekeepers by sharing and spreading information within their network of friends, turned these online platforms into true "*push mediums*" where parties and candidates no longer control the recipients of their messages. Combining this with the fact that, nowadays, most of the parties and candidates have integrated the SNS in their institutional communication repertoire and are using them regularly for campaigning, the SNS became a great instrument to assess the aspects prioritized by the candidates and parties in their electoral campaigns.

Considering all of those aspects, the main research question of this dissertation was: How informative are the unmediated electoral campaigns made on the SNS, in comparison to the traditional news coverage? Or, to frame it in a different way, to what extent is the media logic and mediatisation of politics hindering the electoral competitors from producing more informative and less strategy/conflict-driven campaigns? Exploring this question not only

⁹⁵ Statista " Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 1st quarter 2017 (in millions)" available on (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>)

allowed us to examine how much, and in which way, the traditional media distorted the electoral campaigns conducted by the main political actors, but also to recognize the potential of social media to offer more informative and less conflict/strategy driven campaigns to the citizens.

In order to answer this question, two sets of competing hypothesis, substantiated by the literature, were developed: While the first one, the *Uninformative News* hypothesis, expected the news coverage to be less informative (e.g. higher salience of Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict aspects and lower salience of substantive political issues), the second hypothesis, *Hollow campaigns*, expected, in contrast, SNS campaigns to be less informative than the newspapers' coverage of the election. These hypotheses were tested with data from four electoral campaigns (U.S. 2012, Italy 2015, Brazil 2014 and Portugal 2015). For each election, two broadsheet newspapers and the Twitter, Facebook and YouTube accounts of the main candidates or parties were analyzed during the four weeks before election day. The press and SNS content was manually coded to identify the presence of a pre-determined set of generic media frames that were, according to the literature, relevant and common across different elections. A total of 16,477 different items, from the press and SNS, were analyzed in this study.

The results of this analysis, and the main findings and contributions of this dissertation, can be divided and discussed in three parts. The first one concerns the aspects that were emphasized by the traditional media in the news coverage of elections, and how those aspects varied across countries. This study allowed us to see if the U.S. news coverage of elections was indeed exceptional or if other countries share an identical way of reporting political events. The second, and most important, is related to the comparison between the traditional media and social media. This analysis investigated the differences between journalists and political candidates/parties, in terms of the campaign aspects emphasized by them, and shed new light on why topics like Conflict, Scandal, and Strategy/Horse-Race are so salient in the news coverage of elections made by the traditional media. The third, and final, aspect concerns the adoption and use of the SNS by the political parties and candidates. The extensive study of the campaign content presented on different social media platforms allowed us to go beyond a simple count of words and better understand how these online tools were integrated and used by the parties and candidates in their campaigns and for what specific purposes (e.g. to inform the electorate, to attack their opponents or simply to show the audience how they were conducting the offline campaign). In what follows we discuss and highlight the major findings for each one of these three aspects.

1) - Regarding the news coverage of the electoral campaigns made by the press, and which campaign topics were more often emphasized by the journalists, the results confirmed that, as the literature anticipated, the most common aspect in the newspaper articles was Strategy/Horse-Race. In all four elections, more than half of the newspaper articles analyzed dealt extensively with strategy or horse-race aspects. However, despite being the most frequent frame in the news coverage of all four elections analyzed, the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was still more salient in the American example. About 77.6% of the newspaper articles in the U.S. included the Strategy/Horse-Race, a figure approximately 15 percent points higher than in the other three countries.

Regarding this matter, to some extent, the American example was indeed an exceptional case. A difference between the U.S. and the other three countries was detected in the journalistic style and content of the articles that dealt with the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame. While in Italy, Brazil and Portugal the journalists mostly focused on who was winning and losing, and on the way parties and candidates were conducting their campaigns, in the case of the U.S., in addition to those aspects, journalists often included in the articles some interpretative observations that tried to make sense of the multiple campaign decisions of the two candidates. For example, it was common for a newspaper article to discuss the strategic motivation of the candidates behind holding a rally in one particular place or State. In the American news coverage of the election, like Patterson (1993) suggested, journalists indeed seem to use *game schema* lenses to interpret and report the different campaign events. When we compare the journalistic style in the U.S. news coverage with the other three countries, the American case was considerably more interpretative than the others (almost half of the U.S. articles analyzed had an interpretative style), particularly when framing the campaign in terms of Strategy/Horse-Race.

This thesis' analysis also revealed that, regarding which specific component of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was more salient (i.e. strategy vs. horse-race), that the aspects related to the parties' and candidates' strategies and the way they conducted the campaigns were more frequently discussed in the newspaper articles than the position of those candidates and parties in the polls and the possible consequences of that position. This result is not surprising considering that horse-race articles often also require the release of new opinion polls that are either expensive for the media, and for that reason not so frequent, or are even somehow restricted, like in Italy. In the Italian case, only 2% of the newspaper articles

actually published or showed the results of opinion polls. In the other countries the figure was more than three times greater.

One other salient aspect in the news coverage of the elections was the conflict between campaign actors. The Conflict Frame was the second most frequent topic in the news coverage of all countries except Portugal. This aspect was included in more than half of the U.S. and Italian newspaper articles analyzed and about 44% of the news pieces in Brazil. In the Portuguese campaign this aspect was less salient. In this election, only 30% of the newspaper articles, approximately, included some sort of conflict between political actors. One interesting finding of this analysis was that even though conflict between the campaign actors was frequently included in the newspaper stories, it was not usually presented as the main and first aspect discussed in articles. The Conflict Frame was only on relatively few occasions the first frame presented in the newspaper pieces. Rather than giving the main context to the newspaper articles, conflict was mostly used by the journalists as additional information in text.

Finally, the Issues Frame was only the third most salient aspect in the news coverage of the elections analyzed (except in Portugal where it was the second most frequent media frame). The proportion of articles that dealt extensively with this aspect ranged from 41% in the U.S. to 26% in Brazil. In general journalists opted to inform the readers about how the parties/candidates were conducting their campaigns, the attacks between them and their position in the opinion polls than to discuss political problems or convey the candidates' and parties' positions on different political issues. In addition to this, similar to the Conflict Frame, the political issues discussed in the campaign, even if they were included, were often not the first and main aspect presented in the articles. This was particularly evident in the American election where, even though the Issues Frame was more frequent, only 14% of the articles had the discussion of political issues as its main objective.

Regarding the remaining aspects analyzed, there are two results worth mentioning. The first one is that the Personalization Frame was relatively salient in the U.S. and Italian news coverage. In these two campaigns, 16% and 14% of the articles, respectively, dealt extensively with this aspect. The U.S. and Italian news articles were considerably more likely to discuss the personal characteristics and lives of the politicians than in the other two countries. The second important result was the salience that political scandals had in the news coverage in Brazil and Italy, particularly in the first one. In fact, in Brazil, the salience of the Scandal Frame was even slightly higher than the Issues Frame. This means that the journalists in Brazil gave more attention to the scandals involving different political actors than the

candidates' different ideas for the country. Of course media's *public* logic, or journalists' watchdog role, might contribute and explain this particular result.

Overall, the results confirmed that, even though there were some differences between countries, and the U.S. was to some extent exceptional, the news coverage of the four elections was not very informative to the electorate. Not only the Issues Frame was absent from the majority of the newspaper articles but also the other two main campaign aspects (Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict) were, in general, more salient. Only in Portugal, mostly due to one of the newspapers analyzed, the Issues Frame was slightly more salient than conflict. Knowing this, the next step was to find out if parties and candidates framed the campaigns in a similar way to journalists. In the end, the comparison between the press and the SNS, in all of the different campaign aspects analyzed, gave strong support to the *Uninformative News* hypothesis.

2) - Regarding the comparison between press and the SNS, the main objective of this work, the *Uninformative News* hypothesis had predicted that aspects such as Strategy/Horse-Race, conflict and political scandals would be more salient in the press, while substantive political issues would be more frequently conveyed on the SNS. The data analyzed in this study confirmed all of these expectations for all of the three SNS. Indeed, as it was expected from this hypothesis, the news coverage of the four elections was considerably different from the main parties' and candidates' online campaigns, particularly regarding the salience of conflict and scandal. There were, however, also some differences between the SNS. From the three SNS analyzed, we can say that YouTube offered the audience the most informative and least negative campaign.

In terms of the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame, all of the SNS were less likely than the press to include that aspect in its messages. This does not mean, however, that the Strategy/Horse-Race Frame was not salient in the online messages of the candidates and parties. There were several examples, particularly in the Brazilian and Portuguese campaigns, where this frame was the most frequent aspect in the SNS messages of the candidates and parties. The most notorious examples of social media campaigns that primarily emphasized this aspect were M5S in Italy and PaF in Portugal.

Nevertheless, even though the parties and candidates were also interested in using the SNS to inform the audience about how and where they were conducting their campaigns, the overall salience that those aspects had in the social media was lower than in the press, particularly in the Twitter and YouTube campaigns. Facebook was the online platform where

this aspect was more salient. In fact, if we look only at the first frames included in the messages, the difference between Facebook and the press almost disappears. However, despite the differences between the press and Facebook not being as salient as in the other two SNS, the results clearly showed that parties and candidates were less likely than journalists, during the campaigns, to discuss how the campaign was being conducted and their position in the polls.

Another result of the comparison between the media, this one more relevant, was that the SNS content, compared to the newspaper articles, was considerably more likely to deal extensively with substantive political issues. In addition to this, contrary to the news coverage in the press, there were several examples of SNS campaigns where the Issues Frame was the most salient aspect in them. There were even two examples (Scelta Civica and BE) where the Issues Frame was the aspect most frequently conveyed in all of the three online applications.

Overall, from the three SNS analyzed, it was on YouTube where the Issues Frame was more salient. The odds of this online platform including the Issues Frame were more than two times greater than for the press, suggesting that parties mainly used the format of video to convey their policy proposals to the electorate. When we look only at the first frames included in the messages, the difference between the press and the SNS becomes even more substantial. If, on the one hand, the focus on the discussion of substantive policy information was not a major priority for the journalists in the newspapers analyzed, the same cannot be said, on the other hand, about the campaigns of the candidates on social media. The SNS content was, overall, more than two times as likely as the press to have the Issues Frame as the first and most prominent aspect of the messages. In other words, we could not find any evidence that the low salience of the Issues Frame in the news coverage of the campaigns analyzed resulted from parties or candidates refraining from conveying and discussing those aspects in their campaigns.

Regarding the Conflict Frame, the results showed that this aspect was more salient in the press than in the candidates' and parties' campaigns. The journalists were in general two times as likely as the candidates and parties to include conflict in their articles. This means that the attacks between the political actors during the campaign were not as frequent and salient as the journalists and the press made them seem to be. In fact, only with the exception of Portugal, conflict between the campaign actors played the second most prominent role in the newspapers analyzed, being more salient than the Issues Frame. On the contrary, on all the three SNS, the Conflict Frame was less salient than the messages and videos dealing with substantive political issues. Simply put, different to the journalists, candidates and parties

more frequently used their online messages to convey and discuss substantive policy information than to attack their political opponents. Additionally, compared to the press, conflict and attacks in the SNS campaigns were more likely to be aimed at the opponents' political issues rather than their personal traits and values. Overall, not only the journalists were more likely than political candidates and parties to include the Conflict Frame in the articles but also the attacks shown in the press were mostly aimed at the candidates' traits and values rather than their proposals and position on relevant policy areas.

However, it is important to highlight that the results also showed that conflict present in the newspaper articles usually was not the first and main aspect discussed in them. Instead, the Conflict Frame was mainly an extra feature that journalists added to their articles. When we looked only at the first frames included in the messages, there were no longer any differences between the two media, the press and the SNS, regarding the presence of the Conflict Frame. In other words, even though conflict was not very common in the political parties' and candidates' campaigns, when it was present the attacks on the opponents were usually the first and main aspect conveyed in the online messages.

Finally, our comparative analysis also revealed that political scandals were, in a consistent way, more frequently discussed in the press than in the candidates' and parties' online campaigns. In fact, from all of the seven campaign aspects analyzed, the most substantial difference in the content of the press and the social media was found in respect to the salience of political scandals. In general, journalists were about seven times as likely as the main parties/candidates to discuss political scandals during the campaign. The results also revealed that this topic had more visibility in the Brazilian and Italian campaigns, particularly in the former. In Brazil, the number of newspaper articles that dealt extensively with political scandals was even slightly higher than articles dealing with substantive political issues. However, while the Scandal Frame was overall present in 26.6% of the newspaper articles from Brazil, the same aspect was only discussed in 4.8% of the online messages of the three main candidates. In conclusion, the results clearly showed that the journalists, compared to parties and candidates, overestimate the role that political scandals played in all of the four elections analyzed.

Overall, the results of the comparison between SNS campaigns and the traditional media news coverage clearly showed that journalists somehow gave the audience a distorted picture of the campaigns conducted by the parties and candidates. For instance, in all of the four elections analyzed, journalists overemphasized the salience that conflict and political scandals had in the campaigns of the different candidates and parties. All of the main

expectations from the *Uninformative News* hypothesis were confirmed in the analysis. On the one hand, the Strategy/Horse-Race, Conflict and Scandal Frames were more salient in the traditional media news coverage of the election. On the other hand, the Issues Frame was more frequent in the candidates' and parties' campaigns on the SNS.

There are two important conclusions that we can take from the results presented and discussed here. The first one is that, since the news coverage of the press did not reflect the campaigns conducted by the parties and candidates, the traditional media are indeed, to some extent, responsible for the less informative news coverage of electoral campaigns. At least, in all four campaigns analyzed, the parties and candidates usually put more effort than journalists into the discussion and conveyance of substantive political issues. Contrarily, journalists were keener than the political actors to emphasize aspects related to strategy/horse-race, conflict and scandal, particularly the last two.

However, it is possible, as we discussed in the beginning of Chapter 3, that political parties and candidates conduct two different campaigns, one for the traditional media and another one for the Internet. Indeed, the fact that some candidates and parties used different social media applications for different purposes suggests that those actors adapted their communication to different mediums and respective audiences. Nevertheless, if this was the case for some of the campaigns, we could still argue that journalists and the traditional media are responsible for the less informative news articles. In this case not a direct responsibility (i.e. journalists deliberately distorting the campaign content) but an indirect one, with the candidates and parties adapting their campaigns to fit better the logic and editorial norms of the traditional media. There are however two aspects in the results of this study's content analysis that suggest that the majority of candidates and parties analyzed did not conduct different campaigns on the Internet. The first one is the fact that the nature of the issues discussed in the two types of media was very similar. The second one is that, if politicians adapt their online campaign to the audience, that is still primarily composed of supporters, we should also expect the salience of substantive political issues to be lower on social media.

The second conclusion is that the results confirmed that when political actors have the possibility to bypass the journalists and communicate directly to the citizens, the resulting campaign is indeed more informative and less conflict/scandal-driven than the one usually depicted by the traditional media. The difference is naturally more evident when conflict and political scandals are very salient aspects in the elections' news coverage, as it was the case in the U.S., Italy and Brazil. This suggests that the Internet, and particularly social media, can indeed offer more informative and less negative campaigns to citizens when it comes to the

institutional communication of political parties and candidates. Regardless of the actual impact of this on politics, these results are good news since its alternative, whereby parties and candidates do not discuss substantive issues in their electoral campaigns, would be undeniably worse.

3) - Finally, this thesis also gave an important contribution to understanding how the candidates and parties are incorporating the Internet and social media in their campaigns. As we saw, all of the candidates and parties analyzed in this dissertation made extensive use of almost all of the three SNS to communicate with the public during the electoral campaigns. We found that, from the SNS analyzed, it was YouTube that offered the most informative campaign to the public. On the other hand, it was Facebook that had the content most similar to the press in terms of the salience of the different media frames analyzed. The results therefore suggest that parties and candidates use the different online platforms for different purposes. While on Facebook the majority of posts focused on strategy and horse-race aspects and mostly showed how and where the candidates were conducting their campaigns, on YouTube the vast majority of videos dealt extensively with substantive political issues. The semi-private nature of Facebook, and its algorithms that seek to match content to the users' preferences, might have contributed to this result since parties' and candidates' political communication on this SNS might primarily reach a restricted group of like-minded supporters.

It was also worth noting that the parties and candidates analyzed had distinct approaches on how to integrate and use the different SNS in their campaigns. In some cases, such as M5S, the campaign presented on both Twitter and Facebook was essentially the same. In this case, the content published in one platform was copied and pasted into the other. Other parties, such as PdL, made completely different uses of Twitter and Facebook. In this concrete case, while the content of Twitter focused on the messages and videos of the party's leader, Facebook mostly publicized articles written by the different candidates of the party that had been published on the PdL's website. There was only one case, the Italian PD, where the social media content frequently included articles from the press. Overall while some parties and candidates used some of the SNS simply to recycle content from other sources, there were parties and candidates that used the SNS to produce unique content for that media.

There were also considerable differences between parties and candidates regarding the way they used the different SNS and which aspects were more emphasized in their campaigns. There were parties, such as Scelta Civica and BE, that conducted very informative

campaigns and used all of the three SNS to mainly convey substantive political information to the electorate. But there were also examples, like M5S and PaF, where relatively few of the posts and videos in their social media accounts dealt with substantive political issues. Instead, these parties mostly use the SNS to illustrate to the public, with photos and videos, the political rallies and other campaign events. Overall, it is important to stress that even though the SNS have indeed the potential to inform citizens about the parties' and candidates' position and proposals of legislation for the different policy areas, there were examples of parties and candidates that did not use any of those platforms for that specific purpose. In those cases, the only positive aspect of the SNS campaigns, compared to the traditional media, is the lower salience conflict and political scandals.

Overall, this study offered several important contributions to the political communication theory by showing, for example, that the media style of reporting political events, namely electoral campaigns, by the traditional media is not circumscribed to the case of the U.S.. Practically all of the newspapers analyzed paid considerably more attention to Strategy/Horse-Race and Conflict aspects, when reporting electoral campaigns, instead of substantive political issues. There was even one case, the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo*, where the proportion of news pieces with the Scandal Frame was higher than the percentage of articles dealing with substantive political issues. These results can be, to some extent, considered worrisome since the literature has shown how this style of reporting politics (media logic) can have a negative effect on citizens' political attitudes.

This study also offered, however, more encouraging results regarding the future of political communication by showing that parties and candidates, when they bypass the messenger, tend to offer more informative and less negative campaigns to citizens. This is indeed the most significant result of this thesis' comparative analysis. As suggested by some influential campaign managers such as Joe Trippi, the Internet, particularly the Social Media, might have the potential to reshape political communication by making, compared to traditional channels, the electoral campaigns considerably less negative and more focused on the discussion of substantive political issues. In this sense, as the digital divide rapidly decreases and the majority of online users start using SNS on a daily basis to acquire information, social media and the Internet can have an important role in the future of representative democracies by having a positive effect on citizens' political behavior and attitudes. However, the effect of social media content on the audiences' political attitudes must be further investigated.

Nevertheless, it is also true that, during elections, political parties and candidates are not the only actors salient and active on social media. One of the main limitations of this study is focusing only on the social media accounts of the main political actors and their institutional communication. Since social media users are also exposed to content from other sources it is possible that, ultimately, the main bulk of content generated and shared nowadays on SNS does not differ considerably from the content offered by the mainstream media. Discussions and interactions among social media users can be extremely negative and polarized, and these applications can also work as echo chambers that spread misinformation, foster confirmation bias and increase segregation (del Vicario et al., 2016). It is also possible that political parties and candidates, on the Internet, might deliberately leave negative campaigning (i.e. attack/criticize their opponents) to other actors helping their campaigns. Future research should address this problem and encompass a larger number of actors with prominent roles during electoral campaigns. With automated text analysis methods becoming rapidly more sophisticated, this type of analysis might become, in the future, a feasible endeavor. Overall, the Internet in general, and social media in particular, seem to pose not only a challenge but also an opportunity for future political communication.

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APPENDIX

This codebook was adapted from the codebook used in the project “The Mediatization and Framing of the 2009 EP Elections”, coordinated by Jasper Strömbäck.

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Codebook

Included media:

Time Period: Last 28 days before election day (election day not included)

Selection Criteria Newspapers: News articles signed by journalists, published in the main section, on pages with the vignette “Politics” or its equivalent, or which in headlines, lead paragraphs or photos explicitly refer to the electoral elections. Code only articles that include 10 or more lines of text.

Selection criteria for youtube: All videos with less than 5 minutes

Selection criteria for facebook and twitter: all posts (when the post just mention a link for a streaming video, or candidates full speech (very long videos) code 1 in the)

Unit of Analysis: Single articles (Newspapers), Single posts and its additional content (article or video) (SNS).

A-variables: to be coded for all media; **N-variables:** to be coded for newspapers only; **YT-variables:** to be coded for youtube news only. **NEWSM:** to be coded for Newspaper and Television only. **SNS:** to be coded for SNS posts only. **TF:** To be coded for Twitter and Facebook only

A1. Name of coder

A2. Country

1. U.S.A
2. Italy
3. Germany
4. Brazil

A3. Story topic:

(Each coder should type in the story topic/Key words/, for the identification of the news story afterwards)

A4. Name of the Party/Candidate: _____

A5. Media type

1. Newspaper
2. TV
3. Twitter
4. Facebook
5. YouTube

A6. Date

(The date of the publication of the news story, following the format: day/month/year)

A7. Year _____

N1. Size of article

1. Less than half-page
2. More than half-page
3. More than a page

YT1. Length of news story (TV and youtube) in seconds

TF1: Additional information included: Does the Facebook or Twitter post include additional information such as a link for a journalistic article/video, content posted on another website/blog, a video or a picture.

0. No (only SNS Text post)
1. Journalistic article/video (or posted in news media websites)
2. Non journalistic webpage/article (even if it includes videos and pictures)
3. Video only
4. Picture only
5. Live streaming

-----JOURNALISTIC AND POLITICIAN'S VISIBILITY-----

A8. Does story/post deals with a politician/partisan actor's interview?

("Politician/partisan actor" refers to people that are identified as politicians, campaign spokespersons or partisan activists).

0. No
1. Yes

A9. Main focus of candidates sound-bites/ink-bites?

Code Only when a Political candidate is explicitly quoted with quote marks in text or, in case of video, appears talking. In the case of SNS, code only if the politician is from the same party of the candidate or party's account.

(When coding this variable, the coder should consider all the sound/ink-bites from candidates/politicians, taken together. Code 1 should be used when ink/sound-bites are mainly about politicians commenting on a political issue or explaining own position towards a central campaign issue. Code 2 should be used when sound/ink-bites are mainly statements concerning strategy, chances to win, the campaign, opinion polls, election result, coalitions -- expressions of being confident about the election outcome, motivation of supporters, pleas, asking for sympathy, asking for vote. Code 3 should be used when none of the above is applicable, for example when ink/sound-bites are about personal or private issues. Code 99 should be used when the news story does not include any soundbites from candidates).

1. Issue discussions of policies and news events
2. Statements about victory, support, strategy, momentum
3. Other
99. Not applicable

A10. Main function of candidates' soundbites/inkbites?

(When coding this variable, the coder should consider all the sound/ink-bites from candidates, taken together. Code 1 should be used when sound/ink-bites are mainly about candidates criticizing political opponent or adversarial camp or adversarial political position. Code 2 should be used when sound/ink-bites are mainly about candidates defending one's own position in a controversy, defense in the face of accusations and criticism (e.g. to have reacted too weakly, to have acted wrongly, to have favored the wrong issues, political recipes or strategies). Code 3 should be used when sound/ink-bites are about candidates taking credit for or talking about the benefits of his or her accomplishments or proposals, i.e., talking about his or her own record or policies without defending or attacking. Code 4 should be used when none of the above is applicable, for example when ink/sound-bites are about personal or private issues. Code 99 should be used when the news story does not include any soundbites from candidates).

1. Attack rhetoric
2. Defense rhetoric
3. Acclaim
4. Other
99. Not applicable

NEWSM1. Does the news story originate from events, incidents or statements controlled by political candidates (staged events, press releases and such)?

(Coders should type 1 if the news story originates from events, incidents or statements controlled by political actors, such as speeches, press releases, rallies, staged events, ads and the like, and otherwise 0. Code 99 should be used sparingly.

0. No

1. Yes
99. Cannot be determined

NEWSM2. Degree of candidate-control of the news situation in which political actors face the media.

(This variable refers to news stories in which political actors face the media, i.e., news stories that include political actors and some kind of interaction between the media and the politicians. Examples include political actors being interviewed by the media or speaking at rallies or holding stump speeches. For news stories in which no political actor face the media, coders should code 99. Fully controlled news situation: orchestrated and staged events which are primarily planned for generating positive media reports and where the candidate and his campaign staff control the setting and scripting (photogenic setting, attractive background, candidate and supporters). Examples: campaign speeches, campaign rallies, pseudo events, also: extracts from campaign TV spots. Partially controlled news situation: press conferences with journalists, response to journalist's question or statement in an interview, statement in a TV debate. Uncontrolled news situation: candidate has no control over the situation. He/She is, for instance, under pressure and wants to avoid the media, is visibly reluctant to give a statement (e.g. referring to an unpleasant development for him) or is not aware of the presence of the cameras that "catch" him/her in an authentic moment. Code 98 should be used sparingly.

0. Fully controlled news situation
1. Partially controlled news situation
2. Uncontrolled news situation
98. Cannot be determined
99. No political actor face the media

-----FRAMING-----

Issue/Policy Frame

(Policy issues refer to issues or problems that are or might be subject for political decision-making on some governmental level, i.e., issues or problems that calls for political action or is already part of political decision-making procedures or processes.)

A11. Does the story/post deal extensively with substantive public policy issues, problems and solutions (including also general implications or impacts of legislation, proposed legislation for the public and real-world problems)?

0. No
1. Yes

A12. Does the story/post provide descriptions of politicians' stance or statements about substantive policy issues?

0. No
1. Yes

A13. Nature of the MAIN issue/policy that the story/post deals with (code only when the story/post deals with political issues)?

1. Economy and Work
2. Health
3. Migration and Immigration
4. National Security
5. Society, Religion, and culture
6. Finances and Taxes
7. Environment protection
8. Transport, and Energy
9. Law and Order
10. Foreign Policy
11. Institutional design
12. Welfare and Family
13. Education
14. Other
15. Various
99. None

Game/Strategy/Horse Race Frame

A14 Horse-race: Is the story/post deal extensively with politicians or parties winning or losing elections, legislative debates, governing negotiations, or winning or losing in politics generally or consequences of elections, governing negotiations, legislative debates or other news events for politicians or parties, i.e., how politicians or parties might be affected by elections, governing negotiations, legislative debates, or other events?

0. No
1. Yes

A15. Strategy: Does the story/post deal extensively with politicians' or parties' campaign activities, strategies for winning elections, negotiations or issue debates? I.e., campaign tactics, legislative maneuvers, the way they campaign and how the event looked like (e.g. photos and videos focusing on the amount of people that showed up for the event)

0. No
1. Yes

A16. Turnout: Does the story/post deal extensively with polls and politicians' or parties' asking people to register to vote, come and vote in the elections, or simply vote for one party or candidate? The importance of the election and their vote decision.

0. No
1. Yes

SNS1. Endorsement – Does the post deals mainly with the endorsement made by a celebrity or public figure representing an association or group of people, or just simply focus on a message presented by a celebrity.

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

SNS2. Experiencing the Campaign – Does the post include a 15 minutes (or longer) video or a (streaming) link to watch live a campaign event? Entire speech or backstage experiences and events.

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

SNS3. Support/volunteering – Does the post deals mainly with opportunities and calls for volunteering or asking support in general?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

SNS4. Fundraising – Does the post deals mainly with o calls and opportunities and to give money for the campaign or buy something related to the party/candidate?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Thematic Context Frame

A17. Does the story/post deal with an event or issue in a broader context that deals with its meaning or implications for society? (for example, the story/post includes discussions about consequences, costs, effects on larger groups in society...) or place issues or events in a broad, theoretical or abstract context? (for example, refers to research in the area, principles involved, general statistics, examples from other countries)

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Scandal frame

A18. Does the story/post deal with gaffees, i.e., utterances that are treated as if what has been said constitutes a scandal, offence or violating some norm?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

A19. Does the story/post deal with immoral or questionable behavior by political actors that are directly linked to the office or the position they are holding (questionable fund-raising, withholding taxes and such)?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

A20. Does the story/post deal with immoral or questionable behavior by political actors that are mainly related to their personal lives (adultery, drinking and such)?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

A21. Does the story/post deal with behavior by political actors that are or might be – according to the accounts in the story – illegal?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Media frame

A22. Does the story/post deal with how the media – the own or other media – cover politics (whether it is fair or biased, for example, or praise or criticisms of the media coverage); interactions or relationships between journalists and politicians or how political actors actively try to shape the news (promote good publicity or avoid bad publicity, press strategies and such)?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes⁷

Conflict Frame

A23. Does the story/ post reflect disagreement between parties, individuals, groups, organizations, or countries, i.e., that different actors have different opinions and disagree with each other?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

A24. Does one party, individual, group, organization, or country express disapproval, disappointment, objection or otherwise challenge or criticize another?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Type of attack.

- 1. Issues
- 2. Traits/Values
- 3. Other

Personalization Frame

A25. Does the story/post go into the private or personal lives of (at least one of the) actors in the story or deals extensively with the qualities, traits or image of any of the actors in the news story? Or just centered around the one image of the candidate/leader without substantive additional information?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

Human-interest

A25b. Does the story/post deals extensively with ordinary people problems and experiences that can generate some feelings of sympathy for them **Or just centered around an image of ordinary people/supporters without substantive additional information?**

First Frame Used

A26. What is the first the first frame to appear in the story/post.

- 1. Issue/Policy Frame
- 2. Game/Strategy/Horse Race Frame
- 3. Episodic Frame
- 4. Thematic Frame
- 5. Scandal Frame
- 6. Media Frame
- 7. Human-interest frame
- 8. Conflict
- 9. Personalization
- 99. Other, Impossible to determine

-----OPINION POLLS-----

A27. Is an opinion poll being published or shown in the story/post?

(For this variable to be coded 1, results from one or several scientific opinion polls should be shown or reported in the story. If it is not clear whether the poll is scientific (based on a representative sample), it should be assumed that it is and counted as an opinion poll. Focus groups or similar qualitative methods do not count. The coverage of the poll and the poll results must however be relatively comprehensive. If a single or a few percentages are reported, that is not sufficient. Normally, a full report on an opinion poll makes it clear that “a new poll shows”, and includes rather comprehensive descriptions of the results)

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

A28. If yes, what is the main object of the poll?

1. Party sympathy/vote intention
2. Rating/approval of individual politicians (party leaders/candidates)
3. Issues
4. Other
99. Not applicable

-----JOURNALISTIC STYLE II-----

NEWSM5. Dominant journalistic style

(Codiers should type 1 if the journalistic style largely is descriptive – tells what happened in a rather straightforward, descriptive style and focuses on known facts – and 2 if the journalistic style mainly is interpretive – analyzes, evaluates, interprets or explains a situation while also describing aspects of it. Particular attention should be paid to the dominant storyline, and whether it seems to be chosen by the journalist. For example, the statement "President Bush today announced new measures to combat terrorism, in an effort to strengthen his image as tough on terrorism...", is interpretive since it ascribes motives chosen by the journalist. Code 3 should be used sparingly.)

1. Descriptive
2. Interpretive
3. Cannot be determined

NEWSM6. Does the journalist display a critical stance toward political actors, through critical questions or critical evaluations?

0. No
1. Yes